THE NEST OF SPEARS

E. W. HORNUNG

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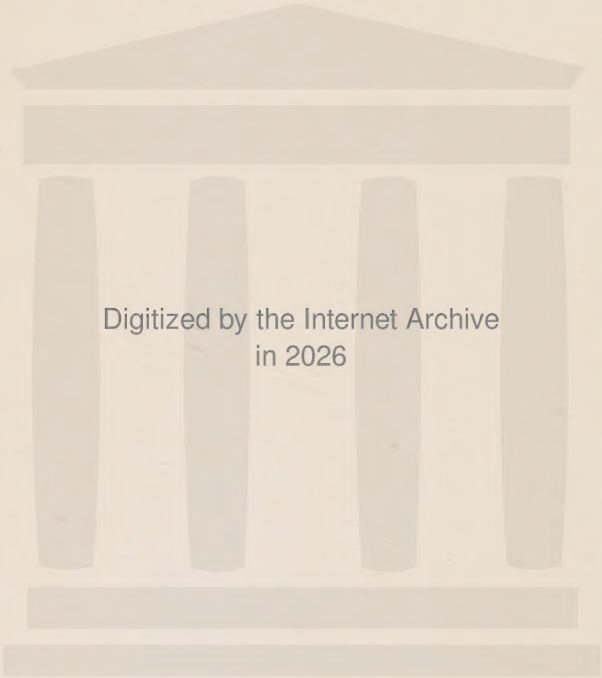
THE NEST OF SPEARS

By F. W. BOREHAM

AGAIN a fine message in human interpretations comes to us from the heart and mind of Boreham. He is a dreamer of dreams, a seer of visions, and an adept analyzer of the motives, aspirations, and achievements of humankind. In this volume, worthy in every way to stand by the side of its predecessors, we have much that falls in with the proper functions of the Preacher as outlined by Paul in his instruction to Timothy, who was told to "preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and teaching." In his introductory note the author recalls an old Maori tale of the absence of war between certain tribes in spite of the fact that again and again everything was in readiness for an encounter. It was the great white manumaire, the peace-bird, that was responsible, for she had stolen the spears of the warlike chiefs and built them into her nest. "In this volume," says Boreham, "and in its predecessors, I have touched upon a thousand questions about which, if we were so disposed, controversy would be easy. But I have endeavored to remove those glittering spearpoints from the realm of strife, and to transfer them to an atmosphere in which the peace-bird can fold her snowy pinions and gentle souls like Whakatuni feel perfectly at home."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BOOKS BY MR. BOREHAM

A BUNCH OF EVERLASTINGS
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A HANDFUL OF STARS
A REEL OF RAINBOW
FACES IN THE FIRE
THE CRYSTAL POINTERS
THE GOLDEN MILESTONE
THE HOME OF THE ECHOES
THE LUGGAGE OF LIFE
THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HILL
MOUNTAINS IN THE MIST
MUSHROOMS ON THE MOOR
RUBBLE AND ROSELEAVES
SHADOWS ON THE WALL
THE SILVER SHADOW
THE UTTERMOST STAR
WISPS OF WILDFIRE
A TUFT OF COMET'S HAIR
THE NEST OF SPEARS

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By

F. W. BOREHAM

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BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

For a hundred moons—so a Maori myth declares—there was no war between the natives who dwelt on the Bay of Islands and the neighbouring tribes of Tippahee. Again and again, everything was in readiness for an encounter; and the tattooed warriors, fully armed, took up their positions in anticipation of a deadly combat. But, during the night before the fray, the spears of the chiefs mysteriously vanished; and the tribesmen, baffled, returned to their *pas*.

It was Whakatuni, the beautiful but frail daughter of the great war-lord of Tippahee, who solved the mystery. Whakatuni was not like other Maori maidens. She loved to wander in solitude among the silent hills and listen to the bell-birds in the wooded valleys of her lonely land.

And one day, on an immense ledge of rock jutting out from the mountainside, she found the nest of the great white manumaire—the peace-bird. And lo, it was entirely constructed of the spears that had vanished from the camps!

In this volume, and in its predecessors, I have touched upon a thousand questions about which, if we were so disposed, controversy would be easy. But I have endeavoured to remove those glittering spearpoints from the realm of strife, and to transfer

them to an atmosphere in which the peace-bird can fold her snowy pinions and gentle souls like Whakatuni feel perfectly at home.

FRANK W. BOREHAM.

ARMADALE, MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA,
Easter, 1927.

PART I

I

THE MAGPIE

One of the most consequential personages about the Silverstream Manse was A.D. I remember very clearly the morning on which we met for the first time. It was a Monday.

'It's your turn to come over to Silverstream on Monday,' John Broadbanks had said. 'You needn't trouble to yoke up; I shall have to drive into Mosgiel first thing that morning; I'll pick you up outside John Havelock's store at ten o'clock. That do?'

It did perfectly. Shortly after ten we were jogging along the quiet road that led to Silverstream. The hawthorn hedges were so full of blossom that, in the distance, they looked like snowdrifts; the perfume was delicious. Rabbits scurried hither and thither; but always vanished into the long grass under the hedge long before Gyp, who was barking furiously in his excitement, could get anywhere near them. All at once I became aware that there was something alive in the box at my feet.

'Oh,' John laughed, 'it's only A.D. We had lost him for the last few days and couldn't think what had become of him. I found him just now down by Craig's haystack. Goodness knows how he got so far from the Manse. He seemed glad to come to

me; and I put him in the egg-box for safety till I get him home again.'

A.D., it turned out, was a tame magpie. Don had found him as a mere fledgling lying in a culvert on the road to Maungatua. He had somehow broken a wing and was fluttering pitifully hither and thither.

'But why call him A.D.?' I inquired, 'he can't be so very ancient!' John broke into a peal of laughter.

'You're on the wrong tack,' he cried. 'In this case A.D. doesn't stand for Anno Domini; it stands for Artful Dodger. We happened to be reading *Oliver Twist* on my slipper evenings, when we first discovered A.D.'s weakness; and the youngsters took the nickname out of the book and gave it to the bird. He certainly deserves it as much as Jack Dawkins did; for he's quite as clever a thief. We have to keep eyes in the backs of our heads when he's about. If you miss anything that shines or glitters, you had better look for it first of all in A.D.'s nest in the stable-loft. The chances are that it's there!'

At the dinner-table the children were greatly excited over the prodigal's return. Goldilocks alone lacked enthusiasm.

'Now we shall have to put everything away again as soon as we've finished with it,' she said with a pout. 'One day,' she added, turning to me, 'I lost my thimble, my button-hole scissors, and my silver pencil, and I found them all three in A.D.'s nest up at the stable. What he wanted them for, I can't im-

agine; thimbles and scissors and pencils are of no use to him!'

That is the point! With the genius characteristic of her sex, Goldilocks put her finger on the real crux of the problem. A.D. is a thief; but he is no ordinary thief. He has a mania for collecting articles that he can neither eat nor use nor sell. Jack Dawkins, the Artful Dodger in Mr. Fagin's kitchen, at least profited by what he stole. His namesake at Silverstream stole without thought of profit, stole disinterestedly, stole for the sheer sake of stealing. He had a passion for collecting, that was all. Which reminds me of an address by Mrs. Ernestine Mills.

Like Mr. Punch, Mrs. Mills has been giving advice to those about to marry. Between Mr. Punch's advice and that of Mrs. Mills, however, there is all the difference in the world. Mr. Punch's advice is severely negative: that of Mrs. Mills is essentially positive. Mr. Punch said all that he had to say in one word—*Don't!* Mrs. Mills speaks at some length. There is no record of a case in which Mr. Punch's advice was accepted. Mrs. Mills has a much better chance of success. In talking to her brides-to-be, Mrs. Ernestine Mills deals particularly with the planning of the future home. The interesting gathering was held at the University College, London, and Lady Emmoth occupied the chair. Mrs. Mills lays the entire emphasis of her address on an appeal for simplicity and economy. She feels that

it will be a thousand pities if the brides of to-day and to-morrow consider themselves under some sort of obligation to proceed upon the lines laid down by the brides of yesterday and of the day before. It is all very well for thrushes, starlings, and linnets to build their pretty nests to-day just as the thrushes, starlings, and linnets of a century ago built theirs; but humanity—and especially feminine humanity—is capable of greater intelligence, greater originality, greater facility of adaptation. Mrs. Mills would like to lead a revolt against superfluous mats, curtains, knick-knacks, gim-cracks, and all varieties of gee-gaws. 'Beware of *the magpie habit!*' she exclaims; and, as soon as the exclamation fell upon my ears, my mind flew back to A.D. and his tiresome depredations at Silverstream.

'Beware of *the magpie habit!*' cries Mrs. Ernestine Mills. We have a way of collecting things for the mere sake of collecting things. We add to our furniture and equipment, not because the addition is justified by necessity, or even by beauty, but out of sheer acquisitiveness. Mrs. Mills instances a number of articles, as ugly as they are useless, that she has seen in various sitting-rooms and drawing-rooms, and appeals to the brides-to-be to set their fair faces sternly against all such abominations.

Mrs. Mills is talking, be it noted, to young ladies who have every prospect of being brides. George Eliot said something of the same kind long ago, but

she was speaking of two excellent ladies to whom, strangely enough, wedded bliss had been denied. George Eliot is mystified, or she pretends to be, at the failure of Miss Mary Linnet and Miss Rebecca Linnet to attract husbands worthy of their exceptional qualities. The home of these immaculate ladies was one dense jungle of spill-cases, fire-screens, wax-flowers, and the like. Yet, mystery of mysteries, none of the gentlemen at Milby seemed to want either Miss Mary or Miss Rebecca! George Eliot is bewildered at their blindness. 'When,' she says, 'a man is happy enough to win the affections of a sweet girl who can soothe his cares with crochet, and respond to all his most cherished ideas with beaded urn-rugs and chair-covers in German wool, he has, at least, a guarantee of domestic comfort, whatever trials may await him out of doors. What a resource it is under fatigue and irritation to have your drawing-room well supplied with small mats, which would always be ready if you ever wanted to set anything on them! And what styptic for a bleeding heart can equal copious squares of crochet, which are useful for slipping down the moment you touch them?' One feels very sorry for the excellent Misses Linnet: some people, it really seems, are never appreciated in this world.

Lest, however, I should be giving a false—and most unfortunate—impression, let me hasten to say that it must not for one moment be supposed that the

magpie habit is exclusively a feminine one. With the instinctive delicacy of her sex, Mrs. Mills addresses herself less to bridegrooms than to brides: but there is no need to distinguish between the two. Magpies themselves are of both sexes; and the magpie habit characterizes the male as well as the female human. Stop the first boy that you happen to meet in the street, get him, for your entertainment and edification, to turn out his pockets; and you will discover that the creature before you is a young magpie in full feather. When he grows up, he will be just as bad: the only difference being that the proclivity will take other forms. Without rhyme or reason we allow things to accumulate around us. Glance along a man's bookshelves, for example, and inquire how the list of the books that he possesses compares with the list of the books that he has actually *read*. Every library should be periodically and carefully weeded, and the books that are only there because of magpie-like acquisitiveness should be sent about their business.

The same is true of money. Unless a man is careful, he will find himself accumulating for the sheer sake of accumulating. Like A.D. at Silverstream, taking to his loft the thimble, the pencil, and the scissors, a man may get into the habit of loading his nest with scrip and deeds and stocks and shares that can never be of any real use to him. Many a man has postponed his retirement too long. He has

worked until activity becomes the habit of the years; and leisure, when at last he takes it, becomes a species of unutterable boredom. Had he retired as soon as it became possible for him to do so, his leisure would have been a luxury; but he allowed the magpie habit to get the better of him and it spoiled everything.

Emerson used to say that the mind should every now and again be submitted to a kind of spring cleaning. All rubbish should be thrown out. A man should make up his mind what it is that he desires to remember, and should make it his business to forget everything else. Otherwise the intellect becomes like the drawing-room that Mrs. Mills deplores, crowded and made uncomfortable by a senseless accumulation of trifles.

At a garden party yesterday afternoon I was chatting for some time with Miss Belle Ronaldson. If I liken Miss Ronaldson to a magpie, she must not think me disrespectful. The allusion is neither to her powers of convention nor to the black and white costume which she happened to be wearing on the lawn yesterday. The analogy is based on quite other grounds. For Miss Ronaldson has an extraordinary facility for picking up every new notion that comes along. In a sense, I admire her. I unfold my paper in the morning and notice, in a languid kind of way, that Professor Brooks-Smyth is announced to deliver a lecture on *Modern Religion in the Light of*

Khantuism. The advertisement ought to interest me. If I were fully alive and wide awake, I should rush for my diary and ascertain whether or not it was possible for me to attend the professor's lecture. Failing that, I should reach down the encyclopædia and do my utmost to dispel my abysmal ignorance on the important subject of Khantuism. But, to my shame be it said, I do nothing of the kind. I turn to another page of the paper and forget all about Professor Brooks-Smyth and his Khantuism until, a few days later, I chance to meet Miss Belle Ronaldson. Her enthusiasm is a rebuke to my indifference. She is literally bubbling over with Khantuism. It sparkles in her eye and oozes from her finger-tips. She can talk of nothing else; but, to make up for that deficiency, she can talk of Khantuism as long as you are willing to listen. The only weakness about it is that a fortnight ago she was just as excited about Dr. Jennington-Page's exposition of *The New Phrenosophy.* She has now forgotten all about Phrenosophy and is overflowing with Khantuism. If you were to peep into her boudoir, you would see Dr. Jennington-Pages book tossed away on to a shelf, whilst a text-book of Khantuism lies open on the dressing-table. A.D. thought the thimble great fun until he came upon the scissors and the scissors were the sensation of his life until he found the pencil.

In the day of his need—if such a day came to him

—the magpie at Silverstream must have found thimbles and scissors and pencils a poor substitute for the useful stores that he might have hoarded. But he was not alone in his chagrin and discomfiture. Historians tell us that the fleet of Caligula sailed for Britain amidst the plaudits of a people who confidently expected that the proud islanders of the north would at last be brought into subjection to the Roman Empire. Having reached the English coast, however, Caligula wandered up and down the beach collecting pretty pebbles and then—set sail for home! And when the Roman populace crowded the quay to see the landing of his conquered generals and captive kings, he showed them starfish and seaweed and beautiful shells! I often think of that Roman record when I try to visualize the Day of Judgement. What, Whittier asks,

> What, my soul, was thy errand here?
> Was it mirth or ease?
> Or heaping up dust from year to year?
> Nay, none of these.

If that august day—the day for which all other days were made—discloses the humiliating fact that, instead of living life to some high end, we exhausted all our time and thought and energy in lining our nests with a few bright baubles, we shall feel that we have perpetuated the magpie's folly on a truly stupendous scale.

II

THE ANGEL WITH THE WHIP

WHY is a whip such a popular plaything? In the course of my visitation yesterday afternoon I chanced to invade a birthday party. Neil Maitland is a happy little fellow; there is certainly nothing of the savage about him; yet his mother was telling me that, of all his presents—many of them much more valuable—the whip that one of his uncles had given him was quite easily his favourite. He liked to hear the swish of it and the crack of it as he brandished it in the air; he liked to feel the falling lash wind itself smartly about the posts and trees upon which he inflicted his castigations. 'It has scarcely been out of his hand all day,' his mother told me; 'he seems as proud of his whip as of all his other presents put together!' Why is it? The question has puzzled wiser heads than mine. The *Poet at the Breakfast Table* was not easily baffled; but even *he* found this problem too difficult for him. 'This world,' he says, 'is full of mysteries. I could never understand the fascination of a whip.' The matter is worth our attention.

And how shall we begin? How, indeed, but by asking somebody to hold a whip aloft that we may all see clearly the thing that we are talking about.

And who so capable of holding up the whip as Robert Blake? For Robert Blake knows how to hold a whip, not only arm-high, but mast-high. When Van Tromp with his seventy-three ships of war appeared off the English coast, the coastguards along the Channel reported that the Dutchman had set a broom at his masthead. He meant to sweep the seas! Blake had not seventy-three ships at his command, but he was not to be beaten by Van Tromp in the matter of symbolism. He ordered a sign for his own masthead:

'I've a whip at the fore,' said he;
'And a whip is the sign for me;
That, wherever I go, the world may know
That I ride and rule the sea!'

Any one can see, by the way in which Robert Blake holds the whip aloft for us, that he perfectly understands the symbolism that he employs. It is to show, he says, that *he rules!* To him a whip is not an instrument of torture, it is an emblem of authority. The admiral who carries a whip at his masthead claims, by that token, to be in command of all the seas.

And now that we have had a good look at the object of our investigation, we may as well go right away back to the beginning of things. Let us visit the cradle of the race! For it so happened that, through those sequestered fields in which the first men dwelt, there ran a river. And, along the banks

of that clear and crystalline stream, there flourished a forest of willows. Now one day, as the first man waited beneath the willows whilst his cattle slaked their thirst, he idly tore down one of the supple and yielding branches. From the slender wisp that had a moment before hung trailing over the water he quickly plucked the leaves; and lo, in his hands he held a whip! He noticed that, at its swish, the cattle started and the birds about him flew away in terror. A strange sense of power thrilled him as he wielded it. He vaguely felt that its possession increased his authority over the beasts of the field. Creatures that had defied him before would be at his mercy now! He felt taller, greater, mightier! He saw that there was an essential distinction between himself on the one hand and the beasts on the other. He understood for the first time what it meant to have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. He had been born a king! He was made to rule! The whip gave him a strange consciousness of mastery, a subtle sensation of command. It was only a wisp of willow, but it meant much. And it led to much. It was the forerunner and precursor of all *staves*, like the staff with which the Shepherd-King tended his father's sheep; of all *rods*, like the rod with which Moses smote the rock in the wilderness and divided the sea before the advancing host; of all *wands*, like the wands of the

Egyptian magicians that were put to shame before the face of Pharaoh; of all *goads,* like the goad with which Shamgar the son of Anath slew of the Philistines six hundred men; and of all *sceptres,* like the golden sceptre that the King held out to Esther, and like the sceptre of Judah that shall never pass away. The wisp of willow is the father of them all. It is the germ from which they all evolved. The whip was man's first symbol of authority; and, as long as the world stands, no boy will ever be able to hold a whip without feeling that it confers upon him dominion and power and glory. A whip makes him monarch of all he surveys. Neil Maitland's fondness for his whip does not augur savagery; it augurs sovereignty. It is part of the magic of his manhood.

Angus Macbean dwelt on a farm about five miles from Mosgiel. There was an understanding between us that I should never go out of my way to visit him. 'There'll come times,' he said, 'when we shall feel that we'd like to have you with us; and, when those times come, I'll easily yoke up "Laddie" and run over to the Manse.' He was as good as his word. Whenever there was sickness or trouble at the Crossways Farm, Angus looked in at the Manse. I remember his coming just after dinner one Saturday. I had heard that his mother, who lived with them, was ailing; so I was not altogether surprised. 'The old lady's very bad,' he said. 'It's not a good day for you, I know, but if you *could* manage to run

over with me and have a few minutes with her, it would be an awful comfort!' I remained at the Crossways to tea; and, after we had had worship in the great farm kitchen, Angus strolled off to the stable. A few minutes later we heard his whistle—the signal that he was ready—and I went out to him. We drove down to the big white gate, and then Angus broke into sudden laughter.

'Bless my soul!' he cried, 'I've forgotten my whip. I won't be a minute!' And he went running back to the homestead.

'But, Angus,' I said, when he was once more seated in the spring-cart beside me, 'I've never seen you use a whip in my life. Was it worth the trouble of going back?'

He laughed again. 'Oh, I suppose not,' he exclaimed. 'I've never struck "Laddie" yet, and I'm not likely to start now; and yet, somehow, you don't feel master of your own horse unless you have a whip in your hand. I like to feel that the whip is here, even though I never use it.'

There lies the secret! The whip is the symbol of authority. Man, as Emerson says, is a god in ruins. In the broken pillars, the crumbling arches and the ivy-covered walls, something of the castle still survives. There are times when a crossing-sweeper feels himself a king. Even Bill Sykes likes to think that he can lord it over his own dog. The whip was man's first weapon and, on the whole, it has been his

best. We are all the better for living in a world that is under the lash. Bunyan describes the Shining One who had a Whip in his hand. He chastised the pilgrims sore, Bunyan says; and they did not soon forget it. 'Let us get on,' said Hopeful to Christian, a little later, 'lest *the Angel with the Whip* overtake us again!' Most of us are incorrigibly lazy. We have to be flogged to our tasks. We march to the crack of the whip. The number of people who have blessed the world without being thrashed into doing so is extremely small. We most of us speak contemptuously of 'the idle rich'; the phrase has become a byword. But what does it mean? It means that the people who are not whipped into working abstain from working; and, depend upon it, the rest of us would adopt similar tactics if the castigation of necessity suddenly ceased. When, two thousand years ago, Horace made his way to Rome, he tells us that,

> Bereft of property, impaired in purse,
> Sheer penury drove me to scribbling verse,

and he thus became the natural leader and federal head of a long line of brilliant writers who have embarked upon the same troubled waters under similarly humiliating conditions. The list would include great names like those of Cervantes, Shakespeare and Dr. Johnson. When some French gentlemen at Madrid suggested to the Archbishop of Toledo that

Cervantes, in recognition of the fame that his writings had conferred upon his country, should be supported out of the public purse, a Spanish gentleman exclaimed: 'God forbid! it is because he is so poor that he writes so well; it is his poverty that drives him to his desk!' Whilst the author of Don Quixote was thus giving rein to his fancy amidst scenes of pitiable squalor in Castile, our own most splendid dramatist was penning the plays that have made his name immortal. But Canon Dean declares that 'if Shakespeare had been the son of a wealthy man, with no need of earning his keep, the chances are that the dramas would never have been written.' The same was true of Thackeray, and it was certainly true of Johnson. 'I was forced to my desk by hunger!' says the old doctor bluntly.

I sometimes hear thoughtless people speak contemptuously of work that was done for the sake of money. Some of the best work ever done was done for the sake of money. What is money for but to induce men to labour? 'Blessed be money!' cried Charles Lamb enthusiastically. It is a matter-of-fact beatitude; but it is nevertheless a good one. In every art and craft, in every department of commerce and of industry, the need of money has driven men to yield up the priceless fruits of those powers that would otherwise have remained dormant; indeed, under the pitiless lash of poverty many a potential idler has pulled himself together and achieved

distinction. The same awful volume which contains the revelation of redeeming love declares that *'if a man will not work, neither shall he eat!'* It is the crack of the whip!

It is no answer to all this to say that in some hands the whip is a dangerous instrument. So, in some hands, is the staff of the shepherd, the goad of the driver—and even the sceptre of the king. All power is liable to abuse. The abuse of the whip reached its climax on the day that witnessed the redemption of the world. *'Then Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him.'* The whip, like the sceptre, has some ugly blots on its escutcheon; but it has nothing worse than that. History proves, however, that any abuse of the power of the whip brings a strange and swift retribution. When Archbishop Temple was Headmaster of Rugby, he was hugely amused and delighted at overhearing one of his boys remark that 'Temple was a beast, but he was a just beast.' There is no need to restrict the scope of the observation to a particular individual. It is true of the race. Man is a beast, but he is a just beast. You have but to expose a wrong and he will soon see that it is righted. When, in our English prisons, or on our English ships, the lash was used too freely, the facts had but to be published and the evil was suppressed.

Or think of the tragedy of slavery. The whip in the white man's hand was the badge of the black man's degradation. The crack of the whip, as it re-

sounded across the cotton plantations, was not so much the proclamation of the white man's cruelty as the proclamation of the white man's pride. The whip in his hand made him feel like a king; and he yielded to the temptation to which those kings yielded who degenerated into tyrants. But the abuse of the whip was the whip's undoing. It gave the abolitionists an argument by which they were able to awaken the indignation of the country. The white man with the whip in his hand lorded it over his ebony brethren; and what happened? Look at this! We are in Jamaica! It is the early grey of the morning of August 1, 1838—the day on which emancipation came into force. William Knibb is conducting a funeral service; and, as the ornately carved and beautifully polished coffin is lowered into the grave, the doxology rises from ten thousand throats! What does it mean? Never before, surely, had the lowering of the coffin been accompanied by the singing of the doxology! But this coffin contains *a whip!* The slaves are burying the insignia of their bondage. The episode is almost allegorical in its intense significance. The whip was man's first symbol of power, of dominion, of authority; but, so surely as that power is abused, a swift nemesis and a crushing humiliation must inevitably overtake it.

And that other scourging—the scourging in Pilate's hall—what of it? Did no strange retribution fasten upon those cruel thongs? He was scourged

that all men might regard Him as an object of ignominy and contempt. Yet lo! whenever the eyes of men have gazed upon that quivering form and bleeding back, their hearts have been melted and their souls won! The torture that was designed to degrade Him has set upon His Name a glory that can never vanish or fade.

III

MARY McNAB

It took me ten years to fathom the depths of the soul of Mary McNab. In the early part of my ministry at Mosgiel, I was often tempted to give Mary up as a bad job. The case baffled me. With my limited experience, I felt quite helpless; nor could I convince myself that I was justified in persisting in my attempts at penetration. Mary seemed secretive and stealthy. She wore a hunted look, and had developed that furtive—almost sly—behaviour that hunted creatures so frequently display.

She lived on the slopes of Saddle Hill. About a mile from the township the road that intersects the Plain joins the great main road that runs from one end of the island to the other. And, at the junction, a cluster of cottages had sprung up. On the outskirts of this irresponsible little settlement three tiny dwellings stood by themselves. They were scarcely more than cabins—mere shanties, consisting of two rooms and a lean-to—although the one in the centre invariably gave the impression of being loved and cared for. It was always in perfect repair; it was beautified by an old-fashioned garden neatly kept, whilst a riot of roses luxuriated over the door. This was the home of Mary McNab; and if she was dis-

posed to be reticent, taciturn, and uncommunicative, her next-door neighbours were not of a kind to coax her out of her severe seclusion. For between Mary McNab and her neighbours there appeared to be no affinity at all. The cottage on the *right* was occupied by Jock Sinclair, a big, hulking, misshapen fellow, pitifully crippled and terribly addicted to drink. In the cottage on the *left* dwelt Judy O'Brien, an Irish widow, a devout Roman Catholic, who worked early and late to provide for her daughter Teresa and her idiot boy.

Mary was not a member of the Church. Silently as a shadow she came, and silently as a shadow she went; and she was obviously anxious that her connexion with the Church should end at that. She always came by herself; slipped into a seat without speaking to anybody: slipped out again in exactly the same way; and, all alone, walked home. In every congregation there are people who desire nothing more than to be left alone. They have reasons of their own for wishing to come and go in silence. It is a minister's duty to respect such sentiments: and thus it was that the years came and went, leaving Mary McNab an inexplicable mystery to me.

Quite early in my ministry I noticed that she always welcomed an appeal for money. If I stressed the claims of the Sunday School, or referred to a new church that was being planted somewhere in the bush, or pleaded for a charity whose treasury was

languishing, or hinted that our work in India was being hampered by want of funds, Mary always slipped a sovereign or two into my hand as she crept past me at the door. She seemed to come prepared for some such emergency, and gave me the impression that she was glad when it arose. It was clear that she enjoyed giving. She went away happier when she left her gold behind her. And the gladness with which she gave seemed to enhance the value of her gifts.

This sort of thing had been going on for some years when I had my first heart-to-heart talk with Mary. I had been farther up the hill to visit Flora Harris, a girl who was dying in the house beside the coal-mine; and, on my return, I caught Mary weeding among the saxifrage and larkspur in her garden. I seized the opportunity, engaged her in conversation, and, to my delight, was invited in.

'Excuse me just a minute whilst I wash my hands,' she exclaimed, slipping off into the lean-to at the back; and the interval of solitude gave me the opportunity of admiring the neatness of her cosy little parlour.

We talked about all sorts of things. She showed me, I remember, an album which contained portraits of her parents, of her brothers and sisters, and of herself as a girl and at various stages of her earlier development. Poor Mary was withered and care-worn when I first met her; but these photographs

proved that she had been a remarkably handsome and beautiful woman in her time. In the course of our chat she referred appreciatively, and, I thought, a little feelingly, to the service of the previous Sunday. I had dealt with the very familiar but very beautiful story of the alabaster box of ointment with which, in those last hours at Bethany, Mary had anointed her Lord. And I had emphasized the Saviour's promise that, as long as this old world shall last, the perfume of that ointment shall be wafted about all its continents and islands. Having discussed in a general way the sermon I had so recently preached, Mary turned upon me with hungry eyes and asked a striking question.

'Do you think,' she inquired, 'that Mary, the sister of Martha, who poured out her costly spikenard in the home at Bethany, is identical with that other woman—"*the woman which was a sinner*"—who, in the earlier days of our Lord's ministry, crept in from the streets and, washing His feet with her tears, wiped them with the hairs of her head?'

Puzzled by her intense eagerness, I confessed that I was not at all sure. I should like, I said, to look into the question before replying. Secretly, I determined to make the matter an excuse for a further visit.

'I will go into it very carefully,' I assured her, as I rose to take my leave, 'and, if I can find anything at all definite on the subject, I will let you know.'

'I wish you would,' she replied; and then, after a slight pause, she added, with evident feeling, *'it means a good deal to me.'* Her words greatly perplexed me; I repeated them to myself all the way home; and, the more I thought of them, the more incomprehensible they became. I resolved, when I repeated my visit, to mingle audacity with courtesy. I would get to closer grips.

A week later I was at the cottage again. She had just shaken out her cloth and was watching the sparrows feasting on the crumbs. Her greeting was more cordial: I felt that I was on a better footing already.

'I am afraid,' I said, when, after some preliminary gossip, we settled down to serious conversation, 'I am afraid I have not solved your problem. But,' I added, 'it may interest you to know that so distinguished a scholar as St. Augustine and so eminent a saint as St. Bernard of Clairvaux held positively that "the woman which was a sinner *was* Mary of Bethany."' And I showed her a sentence which I had copied from Dr. David Smith's *The Days of His Flesh*. It read: *'None ever loved Jesus more passionately or worshipped Him more reverently than St. Bernard of Clairvaux; and he deemed it no offence but a soul-gladdening marvel that the harlot who rained hot tears on His feet in the Pharisee's house was none other than Lazarus' sister Mary who anointed Him at Bethany.'* And I told her that Dr.

Smith himself endorsed this conclusion. I could see that my poor companion was deeply moved. She was leaning forward with her elbows on her knees, and her face buried in her hands.

'Oh, how I should love to think so!' she almost moaned.

And then, recalling my previous resolve, I felt that the time had come to show a little daring. I drew my chair nearer hers, placed my hand on her shoulder, and said: 'Now, tell me all about it! *Why* are you so interested in this question? How does it affect *you?*'

And then, her courage answering to mine, she told me one of the most heart-breaking and most terrible stories that it has ever been my lot to hear. She told me of the sin that had spread its hideous defilement over twenty years of her life. The guilt was, clearly, less hers than another's; but this reflection brought her no comfort at all.

'You cannot understand the anguish of it,' she cried. 'Why, the other Sunday, when you all remained for the Communion Service, and I had to creep home with this vile canker eating out my heart, I thought I should have died on the road. I would stand up and confess my shame before earth and heaven; but it would blast *his* name and ruin his political career; the black, black secret is *his* as well as *mine*. Sometimes,' she added after a pause, 'sometimes I think it would have been more tolerable

if our wickedness had forced itself into the light—if I had become a mother, or if she, his poor wife, who thought me her dearest friend, had suspected or discovered it. But she died—went down to her grave trusting me, loving me, and begging me to watch over her children. And now I can never, never, never ask or receive her forgiveness!' and poor Mary broke into a fresh tempest of grief.

The tragedy of her life was no recent thing. An interval of fifteen years separated the days of her terrible transgression from the days of her tearful confession. I encouraged her to join the Church, and she eventually did so. I shall never forget her first communion. I have often been touched by the solemn yet shining faces of young communicants as they take the sacred mysteries upon their lips for the first time. But Mary sat with her handkerchief to her face, sobbing as if her heart would break. She never took any active part in the Church's work. She felt that her frightful secret excluded her from the social joys of the faith; and I respected her sentiment. She made one or two fast friendships among us. Elsie Hammond, who had a genius for winning the confidence of such shrinking souls, became her special companion. Elsie was with her at the last.

In the cold grey dawn of a sharp October morning we were startled by the ringing of the front-door bell. Slipping out of bed, I answered it as promptly as was possible. And, to my amazement, whom

should I find on the verandah but old Jock Sinclair? Jock was the last man on earth I ever expected to see at the Manse. He was obviously agitated, and I feared that he was recovering but tardily from an overnight carouse.

'It was Elsie Hammond that sent me,' he explained. 'She is staying at Mistress McNab's place, next door to mine. Mistress McNab was taken ill yesterday afternoon and she died during the night. Elsie asked me to let you know.'

He was shuffling away, hobbling painfully on his crutch, when he suddenly turned as if he had forgotten part of his mission.

'My, she was a good woman, was yon!' he exclaimed, brushing his face with his sleeve. 'Many's the time I've come home drunk and thrown myself on my bed with my clothes on to sleep it off; and the next thing I knew was a tap at the door, and there, on the chair, was a tray with some bread and butter and a cup of tea! She never said six words to me in her life: but I tell you she often made me terrible ashamed of myself.'

As soon as breakfast was over I set off for the hill. I told Elsie how glad I was that she was there.

'You're not more glad than I am,' Elsie replied, with deep sincerity. 'I wouldn't have missed being here for anything. Poor old Mary had a lot of pain last night; but it stopped an hour before she died; and, during that hour, it was beautiful to be with

her. She made me read the story of the woman who washed the Saviour's feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. She just murmured the words: *much forgiven—loved much;* and then fell asleep as peacefully as a tired child.' Elsie moved across to the bed and stood for a moment in silence.

When she again turned towards me she told me of an incident that had profoundly affected her. About an hour before I arrived, Judy O'Brien, the Roman Catholic woman next door, had come round.

'Is it true,' she had asked, 'that Mistress McNab is dead?' Elsie confirmed the sad news, and the Irishwoman buried her face in her apron.

'She was very good to me,' sobbed Judy, as soon as she recovered her voice. 'We never spoke; but there were times when Teresa and I had to leave poor little Sonnie in the house by himself; and, when that happened, she always slipped cakes and sweets through the fence, and kept her eye on him till one of us returned. I wonder,' she added, hesitatingly, 'I wonder if I might see her?' Elsie drew her in and led her across to the bed. She bowed, crossed herself, and then, after a pause, turned to Elsie again:

'May I kiss her?' she asked. Elsie smiled permission. Judy stooped, kissed Mary's cold forehead reverently, and then knelt for some time in prayer beside the bed. When she rose, she pressed Elsie's hand and then moved straight towards the door.

'She was very beautiful,' she whispered to Elsie through her tears, 'very beautiful!'

She was, indeed; and on the following Sunday I preached again on the story of the woman who knelt at the Saviour's feet, and whose fond devotion has won for her an everlasting renown.

IV

SMOKE

I

Uncle Remus was in a meditative mood. He sat in his huge arm-chair with Aunt Sally's little boy on his knee; but, try as he might, the child could not lure the old negro into the usual trail of talk. Uncle Remus was lost in silent contemplation; he had nothing to say about Brer Rabbit, Brer 'Possum or Brer Terrapin that night. Uncle Remus was thinking.

'Yes,' he said at last, as if replying to something that nobody had heard but himself, 'yes, we k'en hide de fier, but *w'at you gwine to do wid de smoke?*'

The little boy, accustomed to a recital of the audacious adventures and astonishing pranks of Brer Rabbit, felt that this was a poor substitute for the more palatable fare with which he was usually regaled. With a clouded face he slipped from the old negro's hospitable knee and crept sadly off to bed. I am not sure, however, that his dejection was justified. He himself probably doubted it later on. All this happened, of course, a long, long time ago. Poor old Uncle Remus, we may suppose, has gone where all good Negroes go. And Aunt Sally's little boy, we may further suppose, grew up, after the

fashion of his kind. And I cannot help thinking that, when he grew up, he reviewed and reversed the judgement that he formed that evening. In the great eventful after-days, he looked back with a condescending and almost contemptuous smile on the stories of the Tar-baby, the Spotted Dog, and the other wonderful adventures of Brer Rabbit. But, as the years went by, he saw more and yet more meaning in those sensational scintillations of fireside philosophy that had once seemed so unromantic and disappointing.

'You k'en hide de fier,' said the old man, running his black and wrinkled fingers through his white and woolly hair, 'you k'en hide de fier, but *w'at you gwine to do wid de smoke?*'

2

The smoke!

W'at you gwine to do wid de smoke?

You can do nothing with it, or next to nothing. From the days of the Pharaohs until this very hour, busy brains have exhausted themselves on all kinds of ingenious devices for the prevention, consumption, or abolition of smoke.

'W'at you gwine to do wid de smoke?' asked the soothsayers, astrologers, and magicians of the ancient East.

'W'at you gwine to do wid de smoke?' ask the scientists, inventors, and philosophers of our own time.

But it has all ended—in smoke! It can end in nothing else. Smoke is the most persistent substance on the planet; smoke is the hallmark of our humanity. It came into the world as soon as men came into the world, and it will float around our hilltops and drift along our valleys until the last man has perished from the face of the globe. As I read the stately and impressive story of creation at the beginning of my Bible I can find no trace of smoke in the first five stanzas. But when I come to the sixth, and read of the making of man, I see clouds of smoke blowing across the Garden of Eden and vanishing out in the wilderness. The smoke that ascended like incense from Abel's altar was even in those early days a commonplace. It awoke no sense of novelty, it aroused no feeling of mystery; it excited neither wonder nor surprise. Since then the history of the world has been made, and some small fragment of it has been written. A hundred empires have risen and fallen; a thousand dynasties have ruled and perished. Man has gone from conquest to conquest, from miracle to miracle. He has gradually subdued all the mighty forces of earth and air and sea. He has made Nature his slave, and has read, as in an open book, the riddle of the universe. He has been engaged, century after century, on a march of splendid progress. And ever at the head of his advancing column there has waved his standard. It is not the standard of a nation, it is the

oriflamme of the race. It consists of a filmy column of smoke! Man has never moved without it. It has attended him in all his wayward wanderings by land and by sea. That column of vapour, which has seemed to be the most intangible and transitory thing on his horizon, has, in point of fact, proved the most persistent and enduring. It stands in the twentieth century of our era exactly as it stood twenty centuries before that era began. It is unaltered, unmodified, unimproved in any way. The column of smoke that curled upwards from Abel's altar was just such a column of smoke as I saw from my study window this very morning. By some mechanical or evolutionary law, everything else has changed, yet that dusky pillar remains the same. North, South, East and West; in barbarism and in civilization; in frigid and in equatorial climes; in the infancy of the race and at the crack of doom; there stands your column of smoke, always and everywhere the same! Yes, there it stands, age after age, like a pillar of remembrance, like an inspiring battle-flag, like a spire pointing steadfastly skywards.

Others may sing of the lily so fair,
Or of the butterfly soaring in air,
But my poor lyre I now touch to invoke
A song of thy witchery, beautiful smoke!
White as the snowflake, soft as the down,
Dark as the rugged cliff; grey, dun or brown,
Cloud-like and shadowy, airy and free,
Surely there's nothing more lovely than thee.

That column of smoke is, I say, the natural hall-mark of our humanity.

3

For, after all, Man is very like his Maker. It is easy to see in Whose image he was made. In the days of long ago, the *Presence of God* was announced to the pilgrim tribes by means of a pillar of cloud in the day-time and a pillar of fire in the night. And the *Presence of Man* is announced in the very self-same way. Wherever man is found, you will see the lurid glare of his camp fire crimsoning the darkness of the night, and, in the day-time, you will see a wreathing column of smoke circling steadily upward. Man and his column of smoke are inseparable; wherever you find the one you will find the other.

Our Australian aborigines are seldom credited with any superlative degree of intelligence; yet in one respect at least they appear to be ahead of the rest of mankind. 'In his wild state,' a recent writer says, 'the Australian blackfellow is a wonderfully expert manipulator of smoke signals. The marvellous dexterity with which he can send a column of smoke two or three thousand feet into the air is only equalled by the unerring accuracy with which he can interpret the messages conveyed in the various kinds of signals sent up.' To the inexperienced eye of the ordinary man, this writer points out, one column of smoke is just like another. But the blackfellow

knows how to impart to it an infinite series of variations. He can make the smoke assume almost any colour and any shape; he can make the column straight or spiral; he can make it regular or broken; he can make it an upright pillar or a sequence of disconnected puffs. 'A black boy who served me years ago on the Diamantina River,' says this writer, 'told me one day that his people had signalled to him from twenty miles distant that seventeen of them, including his father, would arrive at the place I was camped at the following day. The boy had read the message correctly, for, surely enough, at the schedule time, the party appeared!'

Here, on my desk, lies Fenimore Cooper's *Pathfinder*. The frontispiece—the only picture in the volume—depicts the scene in which, lost in the endless woods, Arrowhead, his wife, and their two white companions catch sight of the column of smoke. It is Mabel who sees it first.

'See!' she exclaims, calling excitedly to her uncle, an old sea-captain, 'yonder is smoke curling over the tops of the trees—can it come from a house?'

'Aye, aye!' replies the captain, 'there's a look of humanity in that smoke which is worth a thousand trees.' The sight of the smoke has affected him like the sudden appearance of a sail at sea.

But it is the Indian who is best worth watching. For fully a minute Arrowhead stands, slightly raised on tip-toe, with distended nostrils, like the buck that

scents a taint in the air, and with a gaze as riveted as that of the trained pointer while he waits his master's aim. His countenance is calm, and his quick, dark, eagle eye moves over the leafy panorama, as if to take in at a glance every circumstance that might enlighten his mind.

'There must be Indians there!' hazards the seaman.

'No wigwam there,' replies the red man confidently, 'no wigwam there—too much tree—paleface fire!'

'But, surely,' exclaims Mabel, 'he cannot know that!'

'See!' cries the Indian, reading her doubts, 'wet wood—much wet—much smoke—much water—black smoke—too much water—Indian too cunning to make fire with water—paleface too much book—burn anything—paleface read much and know little!'

So essentially human a thing is a column of smoke! Wherever you behold the pillar of cloud in the day-time, or the pillar of fire in the night, you read the announcement of the presence of Man. And a trained eye like the eye of Arrowhead can tell you the colour and the kind of man whose presence you are approaching.

4

It is a pity that Arrowhead and Uncle Remus cannot meet and chat this matter over. For I really

think that this sharp-eyed redskin whom we have met among the backwoods of Canada has given us a clue to the problem that was first suggested to us by the old negro on the cotton plantations farther south.

'You k'en hide de fier,' says Uncle Remus, *'but w'at you gwine to do wid de smoke?'*

'Let the paleface take care how he makes his fire,' replies Arrowhead. 'Much water—black smoke; no water—little smoke; Arrowhead has spoken!'

It is, then, a problem of proportion. In lighting my fire or illuminating my home, I must aim at a maximum of flame and a minimum of smoke. The history of the evolution of illumination—torch, candle, lamp, gas, electricity, radium — points steadily in this direction. It is clear that men have been struggling for centuries to increase the proportion of light so as to minimize the proportion of smoke. For, although man has borne his column of smoke with him in all his age-long gipsyings, he has done it under protest. He does not love the smoke. He simply endures it. He carries it as Sindbad the Sailor carried the Old Man of the Sea, because he cannot shake it off. As Arrowhead the Indian implies, the art of making a fire is the art of getting a maximum of light and heat with a minimum of smoke. That is what Paul meant when he urged the Ephesians to be angry, but, in their anger, not to sin. As much flame as you like, he says, but

no smoke, no smoke! The worst neighbour I ever had was a man who took a strange delight in piling up a huge heap of rubbish, setting fire to it, and leaving it to smoke and smoulder. The smell of his bonfire was on everything in the house, but it was the smell of the smoke, not the smell of the flame. If the great pyre had gone up with a roar and a hiss and a crackle, its long tongues of red flame leaping fiercely skywards, nobody could have objected. It would have been all fire and little smoke. But, as it was, the abominable thing smouldered! It was all smoke and no flame! Now, I have the most excellent medical authority for stating that, whilst every other shred and fibre of my constitution is liable to at least a thousand ailments and diseases, my temper, strangely enough, is subject only to *two*. If I develop a malady in that exquisitely delicate and extremely sensitive organ, I shall immediately become either a *blazer* or a *smoulderer*. And those who have had experience of both classes of patients assure me that, of the two, the blazer is least to be dreaded.

5

One step more. I just now quoted Paul. But the Bible draws to its climax and its close under the touch, not of Paul, but of John. And on the subject of light, John is our greatest authority and final court of appeal. There is more about light in his writings than in all the rest of the New Testament

put together. And all that he has to say is summed up in such sentences as these:

'I am the light of the world!'

'God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all!'

The secret of illumination lies, we have seen, in securing a maximum of radiance and a minimum of smoke. But here we bring the radiance to perfection and eliminate the smoke altogether. *'No darkness at all!'*

Perhaps the conception will prove more arresting if I provide the luminous figure with a gloomy background. Here, then, is the dying confession of Voltaire, confided to the ear of his physician: 'My friend,' cried the sick man, 'you are the only one who has given me good advice. Had I but followed it I should not have been in the horrible position in which I now am. I have listened to flattery, and have intoxicated myself with the incense that turned my head. *"I have swallowed nothing but smoke!"* ' And so, in utter wretchedness, he died.

All light; no smoke—that is the ideal of the ages.

All smoke; no light—that is confusion worse confounded. *'I have swallowed nothing but smoke,'* cries Voltaire, as he turns his face to the wall.

'I shuddered when I heard him say it,' adds the physician, in placing the words upon record. So do I, and, shuddering, turn to Him who is Light, perfect Light, the Kindly Light, the Light in which there is no darkness at all.

V

WAITING FOR THE TIDE

SAUNTERING through the Melbourne Art Gallery—a favourite haunt of mine—on Friday afternoon, I was captivated by a picture that I had never seen before. I need scarcely say, therefore, that it was not hanging on the wall. The people who visit the galleries are always worth watching. On Friday my wayward eyes were arrested by a young couple—she in brown and he in navy-blue—sitting in earnest conversation in front of one of the paintings. Whether they were a honeymoon couple or merely sweethearts, I cannot say: her left hand was provokingly gloved: but it does not matter, the question is of moment to nobody but themselves. She was leaning forward—face in hands, and elbows on knees—absorbed in the study of a picture. He was eyeing it less intently, yet with genuine interest, moved thereto partly by the skill of the artist and partly by the infection of her enthusiasm.

The picture was Mr. Arthur Boyd's *Waiting for the Tide*. It represents a sheltered and tranquil cove in which a couple of boats are lying. The boat in the foreground is occupied by two men. They are doing nothing, for there is nothing to be done. The boat leans heavily over, showing that it is hard and

fast upon the muddy bed of the little inlet. Until the tide comes swelling in, lifting and liberating it, its occupants are helpless. But their presence in the boat sufficiently indicates their determination to ply their oars and leave the bay the moment that the waters rise. Till then they are waiting—idly waiting—eagerly waiting—watchfully waiting—waiting, just *waiting for the tide!*

'It reminds one,' I heard the young fellow in navy-blue remark, as I slowly passed behind them, 'it reminds one of Mr. Micawber waiting for something to turn up!'

I did not catch her reply: I should dearly like to have done so. I hope that, being the wise little woman that she looked, she gently reproved his lack of penetration and discernment. The observation was as shallow as the water in the picture. For between the men sitting in their stranded boat, waiting for the flowing of the tide, and Mr. Micawber pusillanimously waiting for something propitious to happen, there is all the difference in the world. Having had a good look at the picture, let us submit Mr. Micawber to a similar scrutiny.

It is in the eleventh chapter of *David Copperfield* that we are introduced to Mr. Micawber. He is, as ever, on the brink of ruin; and, as ever, he alternates with lightning rapidity, between the heights of ecstasy and the depths of despair. 'It was nothing unusual for him to begin a conversation by sobbing

violently and to finish it by bursting into song. I have known him,' says David Copperfield, 'I have known him come home to supper with a flood of tears and a declaration that nothing was now left but a gaol; and go to bed making a calculation of the expense of fitting the house with bow-windows, *in case anything turned up.* This,' David adds, 'was his favourite expression.'

Three pages further on, Mr. Micawber is contemplating his release from prison under the Insolvent Debtors' Act. 'And then,' he exclaims, 'I shall, please Heaven, begin to live in an entirely new manner if—if—if, in short, if *anything turns up!*'

I turn three more pages and find Mr. Micawber, out of the bitterness of his own experience, pouring sage counsel into the ears of David. 'My dear young friend,' he says, 'I am older than you; a man of some experience in life, and—of some experience in difficulties, generally speaking. At present, and *until something turns up* (which I am, I may say, hourly expecting), I have nothing to bestow but advice.'

And so on. In the daytime Mr. Micawber mingles with the throng upon the city streets, hoping for *something to turn up* among the faces that he meets there. In the evening he throws himself into his chair, adjusts his spectacles, and settles down to the newspaper, 'just to see whether *anything turns up* among the advertisements.'

There, then, is Mr. Micawber! Anything more

unlike the boatmen in Mr. Boyd's painting it would be very difficult to imagine. Something may or may not turn up to gratify the baseless opinion of Mr. Micawber: as a rule nothing of the kind eventuates, and Mr. Micawber is left lamenting. But the tide! The tide is bound to turn! And not only so but it is bound to turn at a certain time. My morning paper tells me that it will be high water to-day at 8.57 a.m. and 7:51 p.m. Mr. Micawber's newspaper —the paper in which he expected *something to turn up* among the advertisements—never once mentioned the hour at which that nebulous and mysterious happening would take place! The men in the picture, on the contrary, know the exact moment at which the waters may be expected to come surging in; and they have everything in readiness.

That, in their case, is the beauty of it! And *that,* in Mr. Micawber's case, is the wretchedness and the pathos of it. Yes, the pathos of it! I think of W. J. Wills, the young astronomer and explorer, the most gallant figure among all our Australian pathfinders. The Burke and Wills expedition—the expedition in which, although only twenty-six, he was second in command—was the first to cross the vast Australian continent. Leaving Melbourne on August 20, 1860, they reached the northern coast early in the following year. But disaster overwhelmed them on the return journey. Their supply of provisions gave out, and they were left to perish

miserably in the hot and barren desert. Gray was the first to die. Burke, feeling that his end was near, attempted to stagger to Cooper's Creek, knowing that there his body would be discovered and taken to Melbourne for burial. Unwilling to see his leader go to a solitary death, King—the junior member of the party—decided to accompany him. Leaving Wills alone, the two set out into the wilderness. They had not gone far when Burke fell upon the sands, and King hurried back to Wills. But, during the absence of his comrades, Wills, too, had passed away. And there, lying near the body, was his journal, kept, as was Burke's, to the very last:

'Here I am,' says the final entry, *'here I am, waiting, like Mr. Micawber, for something to turn up!'*

There lay the pathos of it! Waiting, *like Mr. Micawber!* In that brave young heart of his, Wills knew that, as in Mr. Micawber's case, nothing was likely to turn up; but he made up his mind to keep smiling to the last. *Waiting like Mr. Micawber!* There is an infinity of difference between *that* and *Waiting for the Tide!*

The *something* for which Mr. Micawber and our gallant young explorer are waiting—is a spectral contingency, a remote possibility, a shadowy chance, a forlorn hope. The *tide*—for which these boatmen are waiting—is the natural representative of those stable and reliable forces that dominate life at every turn. The tide stands for the stately dependabilities

by which we are encompassed and surrounded. The masterly mechanism of the universe—the rising and the setting of the sun; the persistence in their orbits of the stars; the paths of the planets; the phases of the moon; the revolution of the earth; the cycle of the seasons; the round of the year—all this, like the ebbing and the flowing of the tide, is wonderfully reliable. The astronomers tell us that a comet that was last seen shortly after midnight on March 3, 1603, will again make its appearance at 9.30 p. m. on September 17, 1962; and we know for certain that, on September 17, 1962, the dazzling phenomenon will again adorn the evening sky. The astronomers tell us that, in a few years' time, there will be a total eclipse of the moon, visible in such-and-such a latitude and at such-and-such an hour; and we know that, to the very minute, the earth will be darkened and the silver moon obscured.

Obviously, there is about all this nothing that savours of Mr. Micawber. We are not the children of chance. Life is controlled by a superb combination of certainties. They may, with the most implicit confidence, be waited for; and they will always prove themselves to be worth the waiting. The thoughtless observation of the young fellow in the navy-blue suit was hopelessly wide of the mark. I sincerely trust that his fair companion, with characteristic charm and sweetness and delicacy, demonstrated to him his egregious blunder and tactfully

set him right. The tide represents our best friends —the friends in whom we can always trust: the friends who never fail—and since *she* is likely to be the truest, dearest, most constant friend that he will ever know, there is a sense in which the tide represents *her!* And it would be painful to think of him as leaving the Art Gallery without a clear perception of the essential difference between her fond fidelity and the phantom-like fickleness of the will-o'-the-wisp after which Mr. Micawber was perpetually dancing.

I find it singularly pleasant to-day to think of those young people—she in brown and he in navy-blue—sitting in front of Mr. Boyd's picture. I hope they remained there long after I myself left the gallery—long enough, at least, to become impressed by the subtle significance that lurks in the lovely canvas. If they did, they will make time, through all the happy years to come, for just such quiet and restful hours as they were enjoying together to-day. For the tide—the tide for which the men in the picture were waiting—is the emblem of all the leisurely things in life. The tide cannot be hurried; there is nothing for it but to do as the men in the picture are doing; you must *wait for it.*

We have accelerated the pace of almost everything. The wheels of life revolve a hundred times as swiftly as they used to do. We dash through the years at a break-neck pace. And we have every

reason to be proud of our achievements. But one cannot check a flush of pleasure at the thought that there are a few things—and those the best things—that still jog along at the same old pace. An oak takes just as long to grow in my garden as it took in the Garden of Eden. The tide ebbs and flows to-day exactly as it ebbed and flowed in the days of the Pharaohs. It soothes the brain and steadies the nerves and sweetens the soul to fasten one's eyes for awhile on these leisurely and unhurriable things. They breathe a benediction of peace on all beholders.

If these young people—she in brown and he in navy-blue—are as wise as I suppose them, they will take the hint. In the years ahead of them they will be tempted to smile disdainfully upon the days when they loitered in Art Galleries and wasted time in doing nothing. To be forewarned is to be forearmed; and therefore I forewarn them. Let them, as they sit in front of Mr. Boyd's eloquent picture, pay good heed to the lesson that the tide is trying to teach them. The men in the boat may be in a perfect agony of impatience; it makes no difference; they must wait. The tide takes its time; it waits for no man: it compels all men to wait for it.

If these young people learn the lesson of the tide, I shall meet them again in the Gallery. It may be in ten years' time; it may be in twenty: I cannot tell. But, however pressing the claims of business and society may become, they will always contrive to set

aside a few delicious hours in which they can sit at their ease, and sit together, luxuriating in the beauty of the world. If the hour appointed proves wet or cold or windy, they will come to the Gallery and enjoy the beauties of *Art*. If, on the other hand, the chosen day proves sunny, they will stroll in the fields, or ramble in the woods, or sit in the park and enjoy the beauties of *Nature*. The tide declines to be infected by the fever of the folk who wait for it; let the girl in brown and her lover in navy-blue take that hint.

Let no man misinterpret! The doctrine of the tide is not a doctrine of *Indolence:* it is a doctrine of *Activity*. In point of fact, the tide is never still. Although it does its work in a restful and leisurely way, *it does it*. And it does it well. It is ever so; the world's best work is done by those who never know the fret and fever of haste. In their impatience the boatmen may feel that the tide is slow; but they know that it is sure. And they know that, before so very long, the tide will bring them their priceless opportunity.

For the tide—the tide for which they are waiting—does not intend these men to spend their lives waiting with folded hands in the seclusion of a narrow bay. The tide, for which they have waited so impatiently, comes at last! And then, if they have the will for it, and the strength for it, they can leave the tiny inlet in which they have been enclosed,

and court a more adventurous experience on the broad waters beyond the bay. And then, as they do business in deep waters, they will feel that the tide, which seemed so long in coming, was worth the ordeal of waiting, after all!

I wonder if those young people—she in brown and he in navy-blue—heard the picture whispering that secret to their hearts! The tide—so faithful and so sure—offers every man, sooner or later, the chance of escaping from the tiny cove of the *Here* to the broad bosom of the *Everywhere,* from the little bay of *Self,* to the infinite sea of *Service;* and they are life's enviable voyagers who, when the sublime opportunity presents itself, are all alive and all alert, waiting, with oars in rollocks, to make the most of it. It is the hour of destiny. The kingdom of heaven pours its wealth into the heart of the man, who is ready when that hour strikes. He was waiting: but only *waiting for the tide!*

VI

THE ASS

He is just a grey, shaggy, long-eared old ass; but I owe him a most profound apology. I ought long ago to have dealt with him in one of these papers; but, to tell the honest truth, I was afraid. I feared that, once I put pen to paper to write about asses, the subject would grow and grow until the essay became a volume, and the volume expanded into a library. There are so many asses deserving of honourable mention in an irresponsible screed of this kind. But, before attempting to deal with individual asses, I must take a generic view of the enticing theme.

Laurence Sterne thought the ass the most sociable, the most companionable, the most talkative of all beasts. The most talkative, mark you! So that Balaam's experience may not be so very exceptional or so very miraculous after all! 'I never like to speak roughly or unkindly to an ass,' says the genial author of *Tristram Shandy*. 'On the contrary, meet him where I will, whether in town or country, in cart or under panniers, in liberty or in bondage, I have ever something civil to say to him; and, as one word begets another, I generally fall into conversation

with him; and surely never is my imagination so busy as in framing his responses from the etchings of his countenance. In truth, the ass is the only creature of all the classes of beings below me with whom I can do this.' Sterne goes on to discuss the possibility of conversation with parrots, jackdaws, apes, dogs and cats; but he gives them all up in despair. They lack, he says, the talent for conversation. 'I can make nothing of a discourse with any of them beyond the proposition, the reply, and the rejoinder; and, those uttered, there is an end to the dialogue. But *with an ass,*' he exclaims enthusiastically, *'with an ass I can commune for ever!'* I am not sure that Sterne states the case too strongly: I myself have often been impressed by something of the kind.

Some years ago I knew an ass in Tasmania, knew him fairly well. For aught I know, he may be there still: I am ashamed to say that, since I left that charming island, I have made no inquiries about my old friend. I have a photograph of him; and, whenever I glance at it, I recall the restful moments that he and I spent together. He lived in a spacious paddock at Lindisfarne. To reach my shaggy companion I had to take a ferry-boat across the harbour and then stroll for half a mile or so round the side of the hill. It may be that this delightful and romantic excursion created an atmosphere which made intercourse easy. However that may be, I was al-

ways pleased when I came to the big white gate at the corner of the paddock. I knew, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that the next few minutes would be pleasant ones. There, a hundred yards or so across the field, was the donkey! Looking up at my call, he would behave as no horse or pony would have behaved. A pony is a creature of moods. One day he will come trotting towards you as soon as you call: another day he will raise his head, stare dumbly at you for a moment, and then, utterly ignoring you, will quietly proceed with his grazing. On another occasion he will whinny, throw up his heels and go prancing round the paddock. You never know in what temper you will find him, or to what kind of treatment you will be subjected.

But at Lindisfarne I always knew what to expect and was never once disappointed. I called, and the stolid but faithful beast walked slowly but directly towards me. He never ran: the creature that *runs* to your call is usually exhibiting mere cupboard love: he comes for what he hopes to get. No, my old friend never ran; but, on the other hand, he never hesitated. As soon as he saw me, he approached me in a business-like kind of way, with the air of one who strolls deliberately and sedately across to chat with an old friend. And it was always I who put an end to the interview. He invariably remained at the gate as long as I was there. Never once did he turn his back upon me.

I have often thought that Francis d'Assisi—one of the choicest and most lovable spirits that the Church of any age or country has produced—has been grossly misunderstood at one point. I refer to his allusions to Brother Ass. To Francis, Brother Ass is, of course, his body; and it seems to be generally assumed that, in referring to his body as Brother Ass, he meant that his body might be kicked and cuffed, starved and over-driven, to any extent. But those who *so* interpret the words of Francis do not know Francis.

With Francis the love of animals was one of the master-passions of his life. He could coax the rabbit in the hedgerow to trust him; the squirrel would come at his call; the birds would eat from his open palm. He would lift the worm from the foot-path lest a careless passer-by should tread it under foot. Now, behind this intense affection of his for all dumb creatures, there lies a spice of mysticism. Ask Francis *why* he shows such gentleness to creatures of every kind, and he will tell you that he can never gaze upon the beasts about him without reflecting that the ox and the ass in the crib at Bethlehem were the first companions of his Saviour's infancy.

The Ox and the Ass! Now is it likely that, with this special and peculiar reverence for the Ass at the back of his mind, Francis can have meant that his body—Brother Ass—was to be treated with studied

brutality? The idea is preposterous. Francis was the first of the great ecclesiastical leaders to protest against the subjection of the body to the rigours of a pitiless asceticism. He insisted, as we should expect so gentle a soul to insist, that poor Brother Ass —the human body—must be treated with reverent consideration and with a constant remembrance of its frailty. He taught his young monks to husband their powers, to regard their bodies as sacred, and on no account to exhaust their energies in needless vigils and fastings. One night Francis heard a voice proceeding from one of the cells of the monastery.

'I am starving,' it cried. 'I am dying of hunger!'

It was the voice of a young monk who, in his enthusiasm, had carried his fasting to a perilous extremity, and who moaned out the words in a moment of delirium. Francis prepared an appetizing meal. Then, entering the adjoining room, he commanded his youthful disciple to rise and share his supper. And, after they had enjoyed the repast, Francis took the hand of his companion, and, in bidding him an affectionate good-night, urged him to treat his body with greater tenderness. On another occasion, Francis found some of his young novices loading their limbs with heavy chains, keeping needless vigil all through the night, and in other ways imperilling their health. It was one of the few instances in which he exhibited sternness. He imperatively forbade such practices.

'For,' he demanded, *'know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?'*

Nothing more searching and nothing more sublime has ever been spoken of poor Brother Ass.

There is an ass in the Old Testament and an ass in the New. Both figure bravely; and each issues with deathless honour from his extraordinary adventure. The Old Testament ass is, of course, Balaam's. I could easily tell the story afresh; but I prefer to make way for Dr. J. A. Hutton. Dr. Hutton's narrative is so vivid that one almost concludes that he was an onlooker; and, at the same time, it is so penetrating that he seems to have got to the inmost heart of the matter at one thrust.

'Balaam,' says the doctor, 'set out upon an ass, a steady old beast which he had had for years. But everything went wrong. The ass shied to one side, and shied to the other side. Having a bad conscience, Balaam became very angry. He took his stick and thrashed his beast; whereupon it turned aside into a field. And then the road became narrower, and the ass reeled up against a wall and crushed Balaam's foot! This was too much. He took his stick and belaboured his poor ass until the ass spoke to him. It put a question to its wild rider. "Was I ever in the habit of behaving like this?" the ass asked in a gentle kind of way. And Balaam said "No." "Well, then," said the ass, "would it not be fair on your part to stop and ask whether, since I am the very ass on whose back you have ridden many a comfortable journey; since, I say, I am *the same ass,* would it not be fair on your part to stop and ask yourself whether you are *the same man?* There is something which is not the same. There is something making trouble. What is it?" Whereupon Balaam lifted up his eyes and saw in the

middle of the way the angel of the Lord! And he came off his ass—the very thing God had been working for—and threw himself on the ground and said, "I have sinned."'

Here, then, in this Old Testament story, the ass becomes a prophet. Sir George Adam Smith defines a prophet as one who sees and who faithfully announces his vision. That describes Balaam's ass precisely. The ass becomes a prophet, a far truer prophet than the prophet on his back. Indeed, the ass becomes an evangelist; and an evangelist who has a prophet for his penitent!

The New Testament ass is the ass who figured so prominently in the triumphal entry into Jerusalem. On Palm Sunday, and at Easter-time, preachers have dealt, *ad nauseam,* with all the characters who figure in the tremendous drama of that first Passion Week. At least they have dealt with *all but one.* Why do they never preach on *The Ass?* They tell us about the strewn garments and the waving palms and the chanted Hosannas; but surely the ass is worth talking about! A rich vein of practical and spiritual significance awaits us there. 'In the East,' says Professor David Smith, 'the ass, with its rich saddle, its dangling tassels, and its bridle studded with shells and silver, is a remarkably handsome creature. When kings went forth to *war,* they rode upon horses; when they went on *peaceful* errands, they rode upon asses; the King of Zion came riding upon an ass because He was the Prince of Peace.'

I saw the conquerors riding by
With cruel lips and faces wan;
Musing on kingdoms sacked and burned
There rode the Mongol, Ghenghis Khan;

And Alexander, like a God,
Who sought to wield the world in one;
And Caesar with his laurel-wreath;
And, leaping full of hell, the Hun;
And, leading like a star, the van,
Heedless of outstretched arm and groan,
Inscrutable Napoleon went,
Dreaming of empire, and alone.

Then all they perished from the earth
As fleeting shadow from a glass,
And, conquering down the centuries,
Came Christ, the Swordless, on an ass.

Christ, the Swordless, on an ass! That is fine!

Oh, happy ass! Most blessed beast! The donkey on whose back the Saviour rode on that never-to-be-forgotten day! It was the glory and the boast of Simon of Cirene that, on the day for which all other days were made, he helped the World's Redeemer to carry the cross. But this patient and faithful and obedient ass bore, not the *cross* only, but the *Christ* Himself! And a pretty myth declares that, as a memento of that notable achievement, every ass now bears the Sign of the Cross upon its back.

In his poem, *The Donkey,* Mr. G. K. Chesterton suggests that the ass, which, according to Sterne, is the most communicative and talkative of beasts, only pretends to be dumb because he cherishes in his heart so wondrous and sublime a secret. Says he:

The tattered outlaw of the earth,
Of ancient crooked will;
Starve, scourge, deride me; I am dumb,
I keep my secret still.

Fools! For I also had my hour;
One far fierce hour and sweet;
There was a shout about my ears,
And palms before my feet.

Yes, the ass has a glory of his own; a glory that outshines that of every other beast; a glory that can never pass away.

And like that Old Testament ass, this New Testament ass is also an evangelist. Mr. Peter B. Kyne has written a novel showing how three of the worst of men became three of the best of men. At the *beginning* of the book these three desperate ruffians will stick at no crime: murder and robbery are child's play to them. At the *end* of the book they are willing to lay down their lives in the desert if, by so doing, they can save the life of a new-born babe.

What was it that wrought the change? They found a Bible in a wagon; and, opening it, the *Youngest Bad Man* read to the *Wounded Bad Man* and to the *Worst Bad Man* the story of the ass that bore Jesus into Jerusalem. It wonderfully affected them. And, as the story unfolds, Mr. Kyne shows how the whole of their subsequent behaviour was coloured by that sacred narrative.

'I have sinned!' cried Balaam, after listening to that Old Testament Ass.

'We have sinned!' cried Mr. Kyne's desperadoes, after listening to that New Testament Ass.

Dr. Alexander Whyte says that the beasts in the ark will witness against Ham in the Day of Judgement. It may easily be that, except we repent, every ass that brays will have something to say in our condemnation.

VII

THE BOARDING-HOUSE

I LOVE a boarding-house. The statement must not be construed as a declaration of personal affection for all boarding-houses. When I say that I love a woman I do not commit myself to a devoted attachment to every female breathing. There are boarding-houses *and* boarding-houses, just as there are women *and* women. The boarding-house of which I am thinking to-day is like nothing else in the solar system. It has a look of its own, a feel of its own, a smell of its own; and the look and the feel and the smell are all of them good. Many a time, when I have been ready for a breath of fresh air, and the opportunity has good-naturedly presented itself, I have motored away into the bush, on and on and on, crossing the plains and skirting the ranges, along the roads that only once in a blue moon feel the pressure of rubber tires, and all for the sake of spending a few hours in a real old-fashioned boarding-house out-back.

I have occasionally been disappointed. In the most unlikely places I have come on boarding-houses that prided themselves on being up-to-date. Everything was just so. The rooms were spick and span, sometimes even lit by electricity. It is a barbarous

arrangement. You alternate between the Stygian darkness and the savage glare, and sigh for the soft candlelight to which you are accustomed at such restful places. The very click of the switch is a mockery and a vexation. It jars upon your sense of the eternal fitness of things. Sometimes, too, I have driven up to the door of my chosen boarding-house and found to my disgust that it was crowded! On consulting the road-map, the place looks to be away at the other end of nowhere, and thus promises you the delicious quietude of which you fondly dream. But, when you reach it, you find that it has earned for itself a reputation as a holiday home, and the season is in full swing. Quoits, card-parties, and concerts are the order of the day; you lie in bed at night and listen to the small talk on the verandah; and, even if a bleak wind has mercifully swept all loungers from that refuge, you are compelled, by reason of the flimsy partitions, to overhear every whisper in the rooms adjoining your own. Such memories make one groan.

No, no; these are not the boarding-houses that I love. The architecture of the boarding-house of my fancy is of a style that was never dreamed of in Ruskin's philosophy. The house is built of wood, or, at least, most of it is. For it is a wandering old place. What with lean-tos, and additions of one kind and another, it has spread itself out all over the grounds, as though it had mistaken itself for a new species of

creeper, or as though, on some hot midsummer's day, it had melted, and little streams of fluid boarding-house had trickled out, some *this* way and some *that,* and hardened again after sunset. The fact is, it did not start out with the idea of being a boarding-house, and had to accommodate itself to its new conditions as time went on. We can scarcely deride it on that account, for in that respect it resembles us all. We none of us set out with the intention of being what we now are; and we have all of us had to adapt ourselves to our situation from time to time. But to return to the boarding-house. The whole place revolves about the cavernous old dining-room whose tables are always half-set. It is a cosy old room, notwithstanding its perpetual gloom. A fire blazes or smoulders all the year round in the great open fireplace. The ceiling is as proud of its tint as a treasured meerschaum. Round the wall are pictures to suit all tastes—a few hunting scenes done in colours that fairly scream at you; one or two engravings of a sentimental kind taken from the Christmas numbers of the illustrated papers; and a large copy of *The Soul's Awakening.* Just across the passage you will find the sitting-room, the room in which my happiest hours were spent. On the table, partly hidden by a copy of the *Sunday at Home* that was issued five years ago, and by a copy of the *Sydney Bulletin,* published four years later, lies the *Visitors' Book* in which, over against an ex-

traordinary tangle of signatures, stand the observations of generations of boarders. Although they are scattered now to the four winds of heaven, you can almost see them as you glance over these entries. You will find here, under the heading of *'Remarks,'* toothless little jokes, outbursts of poetic passion, texts of Scripture, and caustic criticisms of the house and the neighbourhood by people who had not the soul to appreciate it. Just inside the door is the bookcase; and its contents match to a nicety the pictures in the dining-room and the entries in the *Visitors' Book.* On one shelf John Bunyan stands cheek by jowl with Nat Gould; on the next Lord Tennyson is trying to look perfectly at home in the company of Charles Garvice. There is a compendium of the Prize Ring lower down which seems to be chumming up to an odd volume of *John Wesley's Journal.* Was ever such a jumble?

But that is precisely what I like about a boarding-house. The boarding-house is a pocket edition of the universe. It is the centre of immensities, the conflux of infinities. If you go to any other house, you meet one class of people: birds of a feather flock together. It is very nice to spend an hour with birds of a feather; but it is also pleasant, occasionally, to visit an aviary and to see a mixed assortment of birds of every plumage. At any other house, you know what to expect every time the door opens. It must be one of half a dozen people; indeed, it must

be one of half a dozen well-known and familiar people. This is delightful, of course; there are no friends like the old friends. But, for all that, the boarding-house has attractions of its own. Whenever the door opens, you enjoy a thrill. You see a form that you have never seen before. The dining-room door is an opening into infinity, and infinity comes streaming in. And, every time that a fresh fragment of infinity enters the dining-room, all your intellectual faculties start up to greet it. That gentleman with the two ladies at the next table: are they his daughters, or is one of them his wife? The delicate-looking girl at the table in the corner, who always has something to say to the waitress: is she staying up here for her health, or is she the teacher at the little school down the hill? The sad-looking man who has just sauntered carelessly in; is his trouble recent, or is he still brooding over a sorrow buried in the years far back? The young fellow in the plaid suit and patent boots; is he the young lord that he pretends to be, or is he the heartbreak of some poor woman sewing in a lonely cottage? The elderly and neatly-dressed gentleman, who has just arrived in his car in time for dinner; is he a doctor on his rounds, a tourist on his way through the country, or what is he? My companion has a notion that he is a surveyor or a Government official of some kind. I overheard the younger of the two ladies at the next table say that she thinks he is a

commercial traveller. I wonder what they all are; and I wonder what they are all making of my companion and myself! For we, too, are splashes of infinity to them—fresh leaves blown in by the wind, fresh shells cast up by the sea.

The best fun about an up-country boarding-house is in poking about. After dinner I like to go rummaging round. If there is one fragment of infinity about the place more interesting than another, it is Jack. Jack, of course, is the handy man. You will find him out in the yard. Like the hero of a nursery rhyme, his name is invariably Jack. Jack does everything. He hears your car long before you arrive, and is on the spot to carry your bag to your room. Jack feeds the livestock; daily converts some of it into dead-stock; and goes a long way towards preparing it for table. But Jack is never a flunkey. He will stand no nonsense. He is an expert in sizing up just such scraps of infinity as yourself; depend upon it, he knows your measure. You need never be afraid of anybody about the place if you see that he is on good terms with Jack; but, if Jack keeps him at arm's length, you had better be careful.

The mystery is—and it is as great a mystery to Jack himself as to anybody else—as to how Jack came here. Nine times out of ten you will find that Jack was born in an English village. If you happen to know his native county well enough to be able to talk to him about the market town he used to visit,

the roads along which he used to trudge, or the village green on which he once played, Jack will stand there, surrounded by the fowls and the dogs, and talk by the hour. The wonder is: why Jack left the Old Country, and came to the other side of the world to be handy man at an up-country Australian boarding-house! If you hint at this to Jack he will simply laugh and say that it *is* 'a queer go.' The leaf was so blown by the wind; the shell so cast by the sea. At the boarding-house infinity comes trickling in everywhere.

Down by the big white gate at the end of the yard are seven or eight men, each holding a horse. They are leaning against the gate in all kinds of attitudes, talking. They are shepherds down from the way-back stations. One has come nine miles, another has come twenty. They have ridden down to the boarding-house to see if there are any letters. For the old boarding-house, you must know, is, among other things, the General Post Office; and this happens to be mail-day. The mailman rides up on horseback from the nearest post-town; whilst he enjoys his dinner in the corner of the big dining-room, the *incoming* mail is sorted and the *outgoing* mail made up; and then away he goes, jog-trot, along the great white road once more. He, too, is a visitant out of the infinities; and every letter that he carries is a link with another bit of infinity beyond.

You may walk down to the gate; but the shep-

herds are not easily drawn into conversation. They live lonely lives up there among the silent hills; they are shy, and they do not readily open up to strangers. But when you have been here once or twice, you will get to know them. They are worth knowing. You will discover that the tall fellow with the bay horse once graduated at Oxford and is a member of a distinguished English family. The nuggety little chap with the dark hair and the twinkling eyes is the greatest daredevil you ever met. And do you see the man who pretends to be looking for somebody along the road? His gaze is turned in that direction because he is a trifle sensitive about the frightful scar across his face. If you can get him to talk, he will tell you of adventures in India that will make your blood run cold. By the time you have spent an hour with them at the gate; had a chat with the landlady about the people whose names adorn the *Visitors' Book;* and enjoyed an evening with the other boarders round the great open fire in the sitting-room, you will feel as fond of the place as I am, and will agree that, as an escape from the *Here* into the *Everywhere,* an up-country Australian boarding-house is not to be beaten.

And even the houses that at first disappoint you improve quickly on acquaintance. Shall I ever forget going to stay at Waterhead House? Waterhead House is away among the lakes, and can only be reached by means of the little steamer that plies upon

those lovely waters. We arrived late at night, dead tired. We had supper and retired. But our room was near the sitting-room; and in the sitting-room a concert was in full blast. It really seemed an interminable affair. And, even after the National Anthem had at last been sung, the company merely broke up into groups and maintained animated conversations, punctuated by outbursts of exasperating laughter, until it seemed to our impatient ears and jaded nerves that the night must be half gone. We vowed that we would leave next day. But at breakfast we found ourselves seated with some particularly interesting people. They introduced us to others whom we liked almost as much. We learned that the frolic of the previous night was quite an exceptional event, and everybody deplored the vexation it had caused us. To make a long story short, we made a lengthy stay at Waterhead House and formed fast friendships there. Some of the men who, on our arrival, seemed most rugged and uncouth, astonished us by their kindness to a sick girl —a perfect stranger—who happened to be staying at the place. They discovered that health was slower in returning to her than she had hoped; that the doctor had insisted on her prolonging her stay; but that the limitations of her purse made this a matter of some difficulty. They at once saw to it that all anxiety on that score was removed; they arranged her cushions; they brought her baskets of fruit;

they saw to it that she had the best of everything. They made us feel ashamed of the harsh judgement that we formed on the night of our arrival. We noticed, too, that, morning by morning, the visitors whose time had not yet expired trooped down to the outgoing steamer to bid farewell to those whose holidays had ended. And, almost every morning, we somewhere discovered a glint of tears. In a world like this, you cannot get to know people without becoming fond of them. Love creeps even into boarding-houses.

And there is pathos in it, too. 'O these boarding-houses, these boarding-houses!' exclaims the *Poet at the Breakfast Table*. 'What forlorn people one sees stranded on their desolate shores! Decayed gentlewomen, with the poor wrecks of what once made their households beautiful disposed around them in narrow chambers, coming down day after day to sit at the board with strangers, their hearts full of sad memories which have no language but a sigh, and no record but the lines of sorrow on their features! Here are lonely rich men, wondering what to do with the wealth they never know how to enjoy! Here are young men and women, left to their instincts, unguarded and unwatched'; and so on. And, last of all, there is the boarding-house keeper!

Who ever dreams of squandering emotion on the poor body who keeps a boarding-house? The *Poet*

at the Breakfast Table never expected to encounter any sentiment along that line. And yet, those who have followed his story to the end will remember that, even in relation to the prosaic and angular landlady, there were tears shed at last. There came a knock at the dining-room door. The landlady entered. She was dressed with more than usual nicety, and her countenance showed clearly that she came charged with an important communication.

'I didn't know there was company with you,' said the landlady, 'but it's jest as well. I've got something to tell my boarders that I don't want to tell them, and if I must do it, I may as well tell you all at once as one at a time. I'm agoing to give up keeping boarders at the end of this year—I mean come the end of December.'

She took out a white handkerchief and pressed it to her eyes; and she was not the only person present who needed one. She told of her experiences—joyous and bitter—as a boarding-house keeper, and broke down hopelessly in the midst of them.

'Poor, dear soul,' exclaimed one of her boarders, 'her ideas got a little mixed, but her heart was overflowing,' and the white handkerchief closed the scene with its timely and greatly-needed service.

What astonishments and sensations one meets with in a boarding-house! Stay a week or two, and you fall in love with the people who shocked you on your arrival by their noise and vulgarity! Stay a

month or two, and you find yourself shedding tears over the joys and sorrows of the landlady! If a week or two—or a month or two, can produce such surprises, what will eternity reveal? We shall discover to our unutterable astonishment that, in the rush and bustle of this terrestrial life, no man ever crossed our path who, treated with a little patience, would not have proved himself extremely lovable.

VIII

THE STONEMASON

I

REUBEN was a stonemason, a one-handed stonemason, and therefore, no stonemason at all. They called him a stonemason because he had been a stonemason—once; just as they call some of us Christians because we were Christians—once! Reuben was tall and lithe and strong—and poor. His poverty was the triumph of his disabled hand. Once—when he was a stonemason, not in name only, but in deed and in truth—both his hands laboured to make him rich and happy and content. But now the harmony of his hands had forsaken him. One hand tended to wealth and one to poverty. And, in this civil war among his members, the stronger hand was defeated.

In the old days, before his right hand shrivelled into impotence, he was proud of being a stonemason. When the huge slabs and blocks were brought down from the quarry he liked to reflect that, although these ponderous masses had been for ages and ages in the making, he, with his deft hand and his sharp tools, could carve them to his fancy. Only a few weeks before his trouble fell upon him, he had been talking to his workmates of the wonders of which

the human hand is capable. The hand seems very small and very feeble; yet all the work of the world —its art, its engineering, its architecture, its navigation and the rest—is the product of its cunning. Reuben was proud of his hands and delighted in the work that his hands could do. And he liked to think that, by the skill of those dexterous hands of his, he was able to keep Rachel and her children, if not in affluence, at least in comfort. And now, in the full swing of his career, some horrid malady had fastened upon his muscles. His hand had withered!

2

He did not mean to cause discord or tumult or strife when he went up to the synagogue that day. It did not occur to him that he might be summoned to the front and be made the cynosure of all eyes. Least of all did he dream that that day, in the synagogue, his lost powers would be restored to him. They walked to the synagogue together, Rachel and he. Rachel had listened several times during the past few days to the strange and wondrous Teacher who was visiting the city. His gracious words had charmed her beyond expression, and His works of healing and of mercy had made her think wistfully of her husband and his affliction. From the seats of the women she could see Reuben sitting near the back of the building nursing his useless hand in his strong one. He was surrounded by the Scribes and

Pharisees who had come to cavil at all that the new Teacher said and did. In a way, Reuben seemed strangely out of place in such a company; and yet, in another way, he and his neighbours seemed very much alike. *His* life was marred by being fragmentary; one hand was paralysed, and one hand powerful. *Their* lives, too, were marred by being fragmentary. She could not tell in what way they were defective; but, as she compared them with the Teacher upon whom they scowled, she felt instinctively that they lacked something that He possessed. She learned, later on, that religion consists of an inward faith and an outward form. These men had the latter but not the former. Long afterwards she heard the Teacher say to them: *'Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgement, mercy and faith; these ought ye to have done and not to leave the others undone.'* And she understood then why it was that, seated in the synagogue that day, the idea of a strange similarity between her husband and his companions had flitted across her mind.

3

Was it, she wondered afterwards, to show His critics that their ill-balanced and fragmentary lives might be completed that He suddenly summoned Reuben from the crowd and healed him before them

all? She was too startled and excited and delighted at the time to think of such things; but, in the after-years, it often occurred to her as being characteristic of Him. He was never tired of pointing out that life is invariably disfigured, not so much by the wickedness that we commit with the strong hand, but by the work that we leave undone because of the withered one. The villains of His parables were seldom men who did the things that they ought not to have done; they were usually the men who left undone the things that they ought to have done. The priest who passed by on the other side; the rich man who let Lazarus lie unhelped at his gate; the servant who made no use of his talent—these were the objects of the Teacher's condemnation. There was a sense in which all these were men with withered hands. The Pharisees in the synagogue belonged to the same class. And when He called Reuben out, and healed him before them all, He may have intended each of them to understand that his incomplete and deficient life might be made whole.

4

A withered hand, as Reuben and Rachel had learned from painful experience, is a terrible handicap. It is not merely the loss of a limb; it is an impoverishment of the entire personality. The hand is, to many people, the organ of self-expression. The soul of the painter may be flooded with beauty, the

soul of the pianist may be overflowing with music; but, if the hand be hurt, the beauty will never be seen and the music will never be heard. With the shrivelling of the hand, all the energies and activities of life undergo diminution and decay. A withered hand represents a lessened receptivity; it represents an impaired fellowship; it represents a vanished efficiency; it represents a limited degree of usefulness and service.

5

It was a flash of genuine spiritual insight that led Reuben and Rachel to the synagogue. It is wonderful how often we find our lost treasures at church. When Joseph and Mary lost the child Jesus, they found him—*in the Temple!* When Thomas lost his faith, he recaptured it when he met once more with the disciples. The ignorant and superstitious told Reuben that his maimed hand was a signal of the divine displeasure. As in the case of the blind man at the pool of Siloam, they could not be sure whether it was for Reuben's own sins or for his father's, but they were confident that, however that might be, his malady was a token of heaven's indignation. Reuben could not argue with them; but something told him that the cruel doctrine was not true. He could not believe that the afflicted are, of necessity, the accursed. Rachel reassured him by telling him of great saints who were, at the same time, great

sufferers. And when she brought home word that the wondrous Teacher to whose words she had listened with such delight would be going up to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, he determined to go.

It was a true instinct that led him to the synagogue, and to his dying day he was thankful that he went. Yet it was not the synagogue that healed and helped him: he found the Saviour in the synagogue. It was not the temple that comforted Joseph and Mary in their distress: it was the fact that in the temple they found Jesus. It was not the upper room, nor the sacred company assembled there, that dispelled the doubts of Thomas: it was the fact that he found the Master there and recognized Him as his Lord and his God.

6

He met the Saviour in the synagogue as thousands have done since. And the Saviour restored to him his long-lost powers. I should like to have seen that home-going. Mr. Amos R. Wells has made it the subject of a poem:

Praise God! Praise God! Give me my tools again!
Oh! let me grasp a hammer and a saw!
Bring me a nail, and any piece of wood,
Come, see me shut my hand and open it,
And watch my nimble fingers twirl a ring.
How good are solids!—oak, and stone, and iron,
And rough and smooth, and straight and curved and round!
Here, Rachel: for these long and weary years
My hand has ached to smooth your shining hair

And touch your dimpled cheek. Come, wife, and see:
I am a man again, a man for work,
A man for earning bread and clothes and home;
A man, and not a useless hold-the-hand;
A man, no more a bandaged cumberer.
Oh, blessed Sabbath of all Sabbath days!
And did you hear them muttering at him?
And did you see them looking sour at me?
They'll cast me from the synagogue, perchance;
But let them: I've a hand, a hand, a hand!
And, ah, dear wife, to think He goes about
So quietly, and does such things as this,
Making poor half-men whole, in hand and foot,
In eye and ear and witless maniac mind,
To get such praise as that! Well, here's a hand,
A strong, true hand that now is wholly His,
To work or fight for Him, or what He will;
For He has been the Hand of God to me.

7

So, surrounded by critics and controversialists, stands the Son of God. He does not bandy words with them. He has a more sublime and more convincing argument. He multiplies the enjoyments of life by mending broken lives and rendering the fragmentary complete. He sweetens the relationships of life by adding faith and hope and love to the bonds that already hold Reuben and Rachel to each other. He sanctifies the employments of life by imparting a new and sacred significance to Reuben's tools and to the skill with which he wields them. He augments the productivity of life by making toil possible to thousands who, but for Him, would be a

misery to themselves and a burden to their fellow-men. By such unanswerable arguments He is winning His way to the triumph of the ages; and His critics are cowed into silence, confusion and shame.

IX

SECOND FIDDLES

Once in a blue moon it falls to the lot of a public man to read his own obituary notice. Mr. Charles Brookfield closes his *Random Reminiscences* by telling of an interesting experience of the kind. He was laid up at the Isle of Wight with a sharp attack of pleurisy; one afternoon it was rumoured that the malady had proved fatal; and the evening papers rushed out the usual sketches of his character and career. Mr. Brookfield had the satisfaction of lying in bed, propped up by snowy pillows, and reading these lachrymose lamentations and candid criticisms. The latter proved by far the more entertaining. But the climax of the sick man's enjoyment was reached when, in the columns of a leading journal, he was told that, '*though never a great actor, he was invaluable in small parts.*' Mr. Brookfield used to say that he regarded that phrase as one of the finest compliments ever paid to him.

Some of the world's best work is done by those who, by no means great actors, are nevertheless invaluable in small parts. They are essentially *second fiddles*. They have not the perspicacity to see exactly what needs doing, but, once it is pointed out to them,

they will exhaust all their energies in the prosecution of the task. They are eager to help, anxious to serve, grateful to be commanded. They are conscious of their own limitations. They know that they can never hope to lead; but, when they find a leader who knows how to win their hearts, they will show their delight by following him through thick and through thin. 'Dundas is no orator,' Pitt once said; 'he is not even a speaker; but he will go out with you in any weather!' He was a *second fiddle*. So was Jamie Greenleaf, my old Mosgiel deacon. Jamie was no great actor, but in small parts he was invaluable. I never in my life heard him make a suggestion. He had no more initiative than the chair on which he sat. When a debate was in progress, he sat bewildered and confused. His ready sympathy led him to see the best on both sides; and I have even caught him voting both for the resolution and the amendment. In such an atmosphere he was like a fish out of water. But tell him that, at its last meeting, the Church had decided on such and such a policy, and that somebody would be needed to distribute handbills, or run a message, or visit a distant member, or drive the minister to an outlying township, and Jamie instantly volunteered his services. Sunday might bring with it a snowstorm or a tornado, you would always find Jamie at the church door distributing hymn-books. Was there to be a coffee supper or a social evening? You would al-

ways find Jamie preparing the tables and stoking the fire. At the Sunday School picnic it was always Jamie who pitched the tent, hung the swings and kept things merry. If any special service was approaching—a wedding, a funeral, a mission or an anniversary—Jamie always gave a 'cry roon' at the Manse the night before to see if there were any odd jobs that he could attend to. If you suggested that he should make a speech, he looked terrified; he could not initiate a policy to save his life; yet I doubt if any one in the Mosgiel Church was held in greater affection than was he. In every club, school, society and congregation you will find men of this fine type. They are essentially *second fiddles.* Never great actors, they are simply invaluable in small parts.

The cynic will say with a sneer that a *second fiddle* is a *second* fiddle because it cannot be a *first.* It might just as truly—perhaps more truly—be said that a *first fiddle* is a *first* fiddle because it cannot be a *second.* The most striking illustration of this phenomenon occurs in the political history of the nineteenth century. During the memorable period to which I refer, Gladstone was the first fiddle of the Liberals and Disraeli was the first fiddle of the Conservatives. But, at the beginning, the two men were members of the same party. And, as you read Lord Morley's stately chapters, or any other history of the mental evolution of the two men, you are unable

to resist the conviction that they were driven into hostile camps by their utter lack of affinity. Each got on the other's nerves; each felt an unconquerable animosity for the other. Had they continued in the same party, one would have had to be *first* fiddle and the other *second*. It was out of the question. Neither could be *second fiddle* to the other; the idea was preposterous, inconceivable, absurd. And so, beneath the commanding influence of their gigantic personalities, parties were remodelled; the one went to the one side of the House, and the other to the other; and they remained protagonists to the end of the chapter. They stand for all time as a classical exemplification of the fact that, whilst some men are *second fiddles* because they can't be *first,* others are *first fiddles* because they can't be *second.*

Some men, on the other hand, are shaped by destiny to be *second fiddles.* It is as *second* fiddles that they shine. They are second, not because they cannot force their way to a leading place, but because they recognize that they can do their best work in a subordinate rôle. It has been said that Nelson could never have won the battle of Trafalgar but for the assistance and support that he received from Cuthbert Collingwood. On the day that determined the destinies of Europe, Nelson himself was lost in admiration of the heroic part played by his second-in-command. Collingwood, on the *Royal Sovereign,* led the lee line of ships towards the enemy's fleet,

and, first under fire, opened the historic engagement. 'See,' cried Nelson, pointing to his colleague's vessel as she steered straight for the enemy's line, 'see how that noble fellow Collingwood carries his ship into action!' Let us grant for the sake of argument that, without Collingwood, Nelson could not have destroyed Napoleon's fleet that day. But nobody will deny that, if Nelson had not been there, Collingwood would never have destroyed it. The day was decided by the dazzling genius of 'the greatest sailor since the world began.' As soon as the French and Spanish admirals saw the formation of the British lines, they knew that, notwithstanding the superior size, strength and numbers of their own ships, the battle could end only in one way. They were defeated before a shot was fired. Grant, therefore, as everybody will grant, that Collingwood could not have won the battle without Nelson; and grant, for the sake of argument, that Nelson could not have won the battle without Collingwood, and you have only proved that some men are essentially *first fiddles,* and others, just as essentially, *second fiddles.* Collingwood was equipped with every qualification for becoming a *second fiddle.* As a *second fiddle* he was literally invaluable; as a *first fiddle* he would have whelmed a continent in appalling disaster.

Or if, preferring to see the same principle at work in less warlike surroundings, the student cares to shift the scene, he will find an identically similar illus-

tration in the cases of Martin Luther and Philip Melancthon. Luther could never have brought the reformation into being but for the work and influence of Philip Melancthon; and, most certainly, Melancthon could never have done it without Luther. Luther was a *first fiddle;* who can imagine him *second?* Melancthon was a *second fiddle;* he had neither the desire nor the ability to be a *first.*

Everything depends upon the correct arrangement of the first and second fiddles. When, as in the case of Bright and Cobden, the men fit into their right positions at the start, the cause they represent is given an incalculable advantage. When, as in the case of Burke and Wills, the Australian explorers, the *second fiddle* is given first place and the *first* second, the situation can only end tragically. Wills was a born leader; it was the one qualification that Burke lacked. Macaulay has shown that, when Sir James Mackintosh was *first* fiddle and Charles Fox *second,* the Whig cause lost ground every day; but when they changed places it swept the country. There are men who make excellent lieutenants but poor captains; they are admirable assistants but execrable leaders. They are sent into the world to be *second fiddles.*

We ministers are specially sensitive at this point. We are generally regarded as *first fiddles.* Our position involves us in a prominence that is out of all proportion to the value of our service. Every day

of our lives we become increasingly conscious that the real glory belongs to the *second fiddles*. The secretaries, the treasurers, the office-bearers of our churches—the men who, year in and year out, cheerfully devote their time, their energy, their wealth, and their ability to the service of the sanctuary—the men who, in many cases, bore the burden of responsibility before we ministers appeared, and will continue to bear it after we have vanished—how could the Church exist without these? They are the pride and the comfort of every minister and of every congregation.

And what of the men who are quaintly termed 'the local preachers'? Consult the records of any congregation in Australia or New Zealand, and, before you have turned many pages, you will find yourself reading the annals of a time when a few devout souls met in a barn or a kitchen and received gratefully the ministrations of earnest laymen whose hearts had been divinely touched and whose lips had been divinely opened. In the early history of every church there were the gravest difficulties to be encountered and the fiercest prejudices to be overcome. In the nature of things, there were no ministers on the scene, and the positions were bravely and cheerfully taken by busy men—farmers, smiths, clerks, shopkeepers—who, although deeply conscious of their scanty equipment and meagre qualifications, were of faith so fine and sense so sound that no dis-

couragement ever damped their ardour and no opposition ever daunted their determination. When the Churches look proudly round at their prosperity, and joyously recount the mercies that have crowned past years, they do but advertise their base ingratitude if they omit an eloquent allusion to the priceless spirits of these valiant men.

I am very fond of Richard Jefferies. My old friend, J. J. Doke, who laid down his life pioneering in Rhodesia, once advised me to sell the clothes from my back, if need be, in order to possess myself of *Field and Hedgerow* and the other treasures that our great naturalist has left us. My only sorrow, as I have read these classics of the countryside, has been that Jefferies hated Churches and ministers. He turned his back on a Church whenever he caught sight of it, and loved to look out upon the sea because there, he said, he could be sure that the horizon would be disfigured by no steeple. Yet even Jefferies found it impossible to withhold his admiration from the local preacher. In his *Wild Life in a Southern County,* he describes the varied phenomena of a Sussex hamlet. And how can he honestly portray the moving panorama of village life without making some reference to the cottage meeting? He pictures the quaint little room—its old-fashioned furniture and odd assortment of books. There is a Bible among them. Hardly a cottager, Jefferies says, is without his Bible. And no man can interpret that

cottage Bible like the local preacher. 'The good man has been labouring in the hayfield from dawn till dusk; but at night he faces without any sign of weariness the devout folk who gather to hear him. He opens the Bible, and, though he can but slowly wade through the book, letter by letter, word by word, he has caught the manner of the ancient writer and expresses himself in an archaic style not without its effect. There is no mistaking the thorough earnestness of this cottage preacher; he believes what he says; no persuasion, rhetoric, or force could move him one jot. Men of this kind won Cromwell's victories, but to-day they are mainly conspicuous for upright and irreproachable moral character, mingled with some surly independence; such men are not paid, trained or organized; they labour from good will in the cause.' Thus Richard Jefferies, scorning the Churches, doffs his cap to the local preacher. I range myself, bare-headed, beside him, and am grateful to have found another point of kinship with a teacher to whom I owe so much.

I once preached a long series of sermons on *Second Fiddles*. I could not help it. Paul makes so much of them. At the end of his very greatest letter he devotes a whole chapter to *Second Fiddles*. 'I commend unto you Phebe our sister,' he says; and then he goes on to a long list of people who, none of them great actors, were all of them invaluable in small parts. Take Phebe herself. In days when travelling

was particularly hazardous, when means of locomotion and postal services were unknown, she, a woman, carried Paul's letter all the way from Corinth to Rome. Only a *first* fiddle could have written the *Epistle to the Romans;* but how would that epistle have benefited the people to whom it was addressed unless a *second* fiddle had risked her life to deliver it? 'Paul had a multitude of noble qualities,' says William Brock, 'and he had one quality which great men do not always exhibit; he never forgot a kindness, and never forsook a friend.' And everybody knows why. It was because Paul had sat at the feet and caught the spirit of One who takes good care that no cup of cold water given in His name misses its reward. To Him the players of small parts—the *Second Fiddles*—are precious beyond price.

X

PRINCE

I

WHAT fun we had at Silverstream that night! It was Goldilocks' birthday—the first since her dreadful illness—and the old Manse rocked with our boisterous merrymaking.

'And now,' said John Broadbanks, glancing at the clock, 'I think we must have a story and then to bed.' And, for some reason or other, he looked towards me. I soon had a child on each knee and another on the arm of my chair.

'Well,' I exclaimed, gathering up my scattered thoughts, 'and what's the story to be about?'

'A pigeon!' said Don, who had just invested in a pair.

'A pirate!' cried Jack.

'A pony!' pleaded Goldilocks.

And, as it was Goldilocks' birthday, she had her way.

'A pony!' I answered. 'A story about a pony! Let me think! Well, do you know Flossie Turnbull's "Prince," the pony on which she rides to church on Sunday? Now listen carefully and you shall hear "Prince" tell his own story.'

II

'If you please, I'm a pony, and my name is Prince. I don't know why they call me Prince, except that I was once very proud. They tell me I'm a roan, but I don't know what they mean. My master lives in the big house among the fir trees, just across the fields there. My mistress lives up there with him, and little Miss Flossie as well. We have great times together, Flossie and I. In whatever part of the paddock I happen to be grazing, I always keep one eye towards the house; and when I catch a glimpse of a flutter of white among the fir trees, I scamper up to the fence; for it generally means that Flossie and I are off for a glorious gallop together. Sometimes I can hear her laughing and calling before she is half-way down the steps of the great house. "Prince!" she cries, at the top of her shrill little voice. I throw up my head, and prick up my ears, and bound off to the fence to meet her. And sometimes master himself wants me. He has a heavier tread and a deeper voice. I can generally tell when he is coming. I hear him calling for somebody to bring him something as he stands on the top of the steps; there is generally more commotion when it's master that's coming. Or, if he comes by himself, he generally slams the door after him, and it sounds like the noise of a gun. Flossie is always far too happy and excited to shut doors after her. When

I hear the door bang, and see his tall form coming down the gravel path, I always trot to the fence to see if he wants me. For I like master, too. He doesn't laugh and clap his hands and make me cut such capers as Flossie does; she's a born romp; but he strokes my neck and talks to me and generally takes me to new places where I see things I had never seen before. And he always sees that I am well fed, and well watered, and well looked after. And, when we get home, he pats my neck as he turns me out in the paddock, and says: "Now, have a good rest, you've done very well, old boy!" And I can tell by the way he says it that he's very fond of me. He only once rode me very hard, and that was at night. As it happened, I hadn't been out for ever so long. I began to think they had all grown tired of me. And, as for Flossie, I never saw her at all. I wondered what had become of her. Then, one night, master came to the stable and woke me up. "Come on, Prince," he said, "we shall have to fly!" And his voice was not as firm as usual. And, my, how we tore along the road to Mosgiel that night! Presently we came to a house with a red lamp outside. Master sprang off my back, and tore at the door-bell; and very soon master and the man who lived there were galloping back again side by side, and the other man's horse and I raced as though our lives depended on it. When master put me back in my stable, all smothered in foam, he

threw a rug over me, and said, as he patted my neck: "I'm sorry, old man, but she's very ill, you know!" And I knew that his regret was genuine.

'A few weeks later, they both came together down the path between the fir trees—master and Flossie. He was helping her, and her face was as white as her dress. "Prince!" she cried, and I nearly went wild with delight. How I careered round and round! And at last I stopped suddenly against the slip-panel just as they reached it. "No, no! that won't do, Prince," master said, "no tricks to-day, you know! you must be on your very best behaviour, as gentle as a lamb!" Oh, how glad I was to feel her on my back once more, and what pains I took not to stumble or jolt her that day! And ever since then, somehow, I've been more pleased than ever to hear her call. "Prince!" she says in her sweet, soft voice, and I tell you I'm there like a shot!'

III

'It wasn't always like that. I remember when master brought me here for the first time. Oh dear, oh dear, what a stupid pony I was! I struggled nearly all the way here. I reared and jibbed and shied and plunged, and kicked at everything I could. Master and Flossie came down to the paddock to see me.

'"I'm afraid," Flossie said tremblingly, "I'm

afraid that I shall never be able to ride him, Papa dear; he's dreadfully wild."

'"Ah, well, girlie," master replied, "we shall see. We must be patient with him for awhile. He may get to know us better some day."

'But I made up my mind that I would never let them do what they liked with me. I lashed out with my heels whenever they came near me. "Don't come too near the fence, Flossie," master used to say, "you never know what he'll do next!" I smashed everything I could. Master used to come down with a saddle and bridle over his arm; and off I went, racing round the field like a creature that was mad. At last master brought some men with him. They had all sorts of straps and trappings for my mouth and legs, and I had an awful time. The more I struggled the worse it seemed. At length I found out that it was best to do what they wanted me to do. When I saw master coming with the saddle, I ran round the paddock once or twice, but I finished up by letting him catch me. I didn't know then how nice he was, and what fun I should have with Flossie. I was very silly and very stubborn; and nobody suffered for it more than I did. Those were dreadful days, and I try hard to forget them.

IV

'A strange thing happened the other day. It was Sunday. Flossie isn't very strong yet, and the

church is rather a long way, so she rode. The others walked. I could find my way with my eyes shut to the Silverstream church, and they tied me up to a post just beside it. I like the noise they make—singing, I think they call it—although they don't know that I do. I noticed that Flossie was very quiet and thoughtful all the way home. But in the afternoon master and she came for a little stroll round the garden and the paddocks, and when they reached the panel Flossie leaned against it and said:

'"Papa, didn't you think Mr. Broadbanks was preaching all about Prince this morning?"

'"About Prince, dearie; how?"

'"Why, you know, Papa, his text was, *'Be ye not as the horse that has no understanding, whose trappings must be bit and bridle to hold him, else he will not come near unto thee.'* And he said that David was like a horse that did not understand his master. He got as far from God as he could, just as Prince used to get as far from us as *he* could. He fought against God, just as Prince used to rear and kick and plunge whenever we came near him. And Mr. Broadbanks said how unhappy a horse must be in those days when he has to be forced by bits and trappings into doing everything. I thought of the days when the men used to come and take poor old Prince out. How wretched he looked! And then Mr. Broadbanks said that David felt like that. You remember he read from the same Psalm: *'My bones*

waxed old through my roaring all the day long, for day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me, my moisture was turned into the drought of summer.' And then Mr. Broadbanks said that, after awhile, the horse sees how silly he has been. And, after that, he needs no horrid bits and straps and things. He comes when he's called, and loves his master because he has discovered that his master loves him. And he said that David was just like that. When he found out how good and tender and kind God really was, he was ashamed to think that he ever refused to come when God called him. For he loved God dearly afterwards, just as Prince loves us."

'And then she stroked my face, and leaned her pretty head against mine; and although I don't understand half that she said, I know it must all have been perfectly true.'

V

'There now,' I said, 'that's Prince's story; away you go to bed!'

And when, before setting out for Mosgiel, I peeped in at them a couple of hours later, they were lost in the land of dreams.

PART II

I

THE HORROR IN THE HEDGE

It was only the stump of an old tree, partly concealed by the leafless hedge; but 'Brownie' shied at it, swerved suddenly aside, and, but for his master's firm hand upon the reins, would have precipitated the buggy down the opposite bank. We were on our way to Kumalong. Kumalong is an out-back sheep-station, about as near the other end of Nowhere as any man need wish to get. John Broadbanks had promised to visit the place and had asked me to go with him for the sake of company. We had scarcely started when we met with the experience that I have just described.

'Why, bless me,' exclaimed John, 'it's the second time he's done that! He shied at the very same stump when I was passing here last week. We'll let him have a good look at it!'

Handing me the reins, he jumped down, took 'Brownie's' head, and led him gently towards the object that had so terrified him. 'Brownie' scarcely appreciated the performance. His ears were thrown back; his eyes were filled with evident alarm; he moved slowly, unwillingly, and with obvious apprehension. When close up to the hedge, however, he soon regained his composure. Tugging at the reins,

he lowered his head and devoted his attention to the long rich grass by the side of the road. And we noticed on the return journey that he passed the spot without the slightest indication of fear.

We received a boisterous welcome at Kumalong. We had intended staying only one night; but the family would not hear of so early a departure.

'I never heard of such a thing,' exclaimed Mr. Dawson, when we unfolded our plan. 'Why, how often do you suppose that we get a couple of ministers at this outlandish place? It's the event of a lifetime: such a thing has never happened before: we must make the most of it! You must remain over to-morrow night, at any rate! I'll get Harry to ride around on his pony during the day, and we'll gather all the shepherds, the shearers, and everybody about the place, for a service here in the evening. The moon will be up by ten o'clock to light them home, and you'll be surprised at their eagerness to come.'

How could such an appeal be resisted? Next morning, whilst John was attending to 'Brownie,' and discussing with Mr. Dawson several matters that he had specially come to arrange, I sauntered out on to the broad sun-lit verandah, and drew from my pocket the book that I had brought to beguile such moments. It chanced to be Joseph Conrad's *Typhoon,* which had just been published. I quickly left the tranquillity of the sheep-station a million miles behind, for, as those know who have read it,

Typhoon is the story of a storm. Mr. W. L. Courtney says that it is the most terrific photograph of the mad rage of winds and sea that has ever been produced on paper; and Anthony Clyne declares that, in that respect, it is unsurpassed in the whole range of literature. I was nearing the end of this whirling tornado of elemental fury when I was startled by this priceless gem of nautical philosophy.

'Keep her facing it!' cried Captain MacWhirr to Jukes, the mate, when things were at their worst. 'Don't you be put out by anything! Keep her facing it! They may say what they like, but the heaviest seas run with the wind. Facing it—always facing it—that's the way to get through. You are a young sailor. *Face it!* That's enough for any man. Keep a cool head—and *face it!*'

I had just read these striking words a second time when John stepped on to the verandah close behind me. His sudden appearance brought me back with a jolt from the tumult of the China seas to the placidity of life at Kumalong. The vast panorama of hill and valley, the song of the birds in the belt of bush near by, and the lowing of cattle in a neighbouring paddock claimed my mind and heart once more.

'Hulloa!' John exclaimed, glancing at the open volume, 'struck a gold mine?'

'Sit down!' I replied, 'and I'll read you something good.' I picked up the book and read the passage about *facing it.* 'It reminded me,' I added, 'of what

happened coming along. Poor old "Brownie" soon got over his horror of the stump when you made him *face it.*'

'It's always the best way with horses, at any rate,' he replied; 'but that isn't what I came to see you about. I find that they're expecting a great crowd at this service to-night. You'll give the address, won't you? I've been at Kumalong before, and expect to be here again: but you're a visitor: and it will be a change for them if you will do it. And, anyhow, I'm not feeling quite up to the mark this morning, and haven't an idea in my head.'

I consented. A few hours later, the huge kitchen was packed with as motley a congregation as any minister could be called to address. Here were Mr. and Mrs. Dawson, their sons and daughters, and two or three relatives who happened to be visiting the station. Here were a bevy of young women who attended to the duties of the homestead and the dairy. Here were a number of young English gentlemen—jackeroos, as they are called in Australia—who were attached to the station in the capacity of apprentices: they were spending a year or two with Mr. Dawson before investing in stations of their own. Two of them, I found, had been at Oxford and one at Cambridge. Here, too, were drovers and stockmen, shepherds and trappers, rough-riders and shearers, handymen and rouse-abouts, station-boys and boundary-riders, the cook,

the blacksmith, two or three swagmen, and a few others. Some of the men had brought their wives and children. Who could have dreamed that these solitudes were in reality so populous? John presided; Miss Kittie Dawson acted as organist; in the absence of hymn-books we sang the old favourites that everybody knows; and in due time I was called upon to deliver an address.

I had experienced no difficulty at all in the selection of a theme. There are times—and they are the best times—when a minister no more chooses a text than a lover chooses a wife. For him there is but one. He becomes hopelessly enamoured of that single theme and no other swims into the field of his vision. I thought of 'Brownie' and the stump; I thought of Joseph Conrad's skipper and his advice about the storm: and I resolved to speak on the *Wisdom of Facing Things.* I remember making some pencil notes which I must have left in the kitchen or lost on the way home. I possess no record of what I said. I remember telling the stories of the stump and the storm, and I remember my text. It was from the prophecy of Amos: *As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house and leaned his hand on the well, and a serpent bit him.* I can never hope to be the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Dawson again; but the memory of my visit to Kumalong has revived the fascination of the text; and I mean to take it again one of these days.

The prophet's point is that the great facts of life cannot be evaded: it is better to face them. He is sternly rebuking those who, refusing to grapple with the grave and serious problems by which the nation is confronted, supinely and impotently sigh for 'the day of the Lord.' 'Woe unto you,' he says, 'who desire the day of the Lord! To what end is it for you? the day of the Lord is darkness and not light. *As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him!*'

The tendency is very common. In his *French Revolution,* Carlyle has a striking passage in which he shows that Cromwell and Robespierre were called upon—the one in London and the other in Paris; the one in the seventeenth century and the other in the eighteenth—to face identically similar situations. Each was the leader of the revolutionary forces; each overthrew a throne and sent a monarch to the scaffold; each fell under the suspicion that he aspired to arrogate to himself the sovereign power. When that critical situation confronted Cromwell he faced it on the instant, reckoned with his accusers, and silenced all the murmurs of discontent. Under identically the same circumstances, Robespierre hesitated and dallied; his indecision confirmed the suspicions of his enemies; and an infuriated and impatient mob hurried him away to the guillotine. It was a moment that demanded instant decision.

There are times when everything may be lost by a mere shirking of the difficulties and responsibilities of the moment. Dr. Robertson, in his *History of Charles the Fifth,* points out that when Martin Luther nailed his famous theses to the Church door at Wittenberg, the Pope might have avoided the subsequent storm by either of two bold and definite actions. Leo the Tenth might have instantly and heavily punished the daring young monk for his insubordination, and thus have intimidated the people from attending to the new ideas; or he might at once have commended him, and removed those serious ecclesiastical scandals at which the protest was directed. Either course would probably have turned the power and influence of Luther's life into quite another channel. But the Pope took neither. He acted indecisively in an hour that, of all things, clamoured for decision; and, through the Papal weakness, Luther forced his way to his subsequent victory.

Life abounds in facts that will frighten us, as the stump in the hedge frightened 'Brownie,' until they are bravely and resolutely faced. A young fellow leaves home. Almost as soon as the familiar doors are closed behind him he finds himself confronted by intellectual problems and practical difficulties. His first impulse is to go from the extreme of credulity to the extreme of unbelief. Hitherto he has believed *all* that his mother taught him: henceforth he will

believe *nothing* that she taught him. Like 'Brownie,' he shies at the stump on one side of the road, and, in doing so, nearly overturns the buggy down the bank on the other. There is a better way—John Broadbanks' way. He led 'Brownie' right up to the stump in the hedge. The things that frighten us should be faced.

The people to whom the prophet appealed were anxious to avoid the troubles by which they were confronted, and nervously sighed for the day of the Lord to come. And Amos rebuked them, in stinging words, for their cowardice. In a weak moment, the same temptation comes to many men. It is the awful deception to which the suicide yields. Trouble is like a lion in his way. He seeks to avoid it, as the house of Israel thought to avoid it, by a premature and unhallowed rush into the unseen and eternal. If such men knew the truth they would rather face those ills they have than fly to others that they know not of. Madame Antoinette Sterling met, on the banks of the Serpentine, a lady who had resolved to end her worries in the cold waters beside her. The great singer gently took her hand, and reminded her that she could not escape her troubles so easily. 'You will still be *yourself,* you know, when you have left the body behind!' *'As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him.'* It is simply going from bad to worse. Trouble is a fact in human experience which it is impossible to

avoid. It is better to face it. In one of the choicest passages of *The Mill on the Floss,* George Eliot describes the spirit in which Mr. Tulliver met his misfortunes. He turns to honest Luke and says that he will go down to the wrecked mill and see the worst for himself. 'Ay, sir,' says Luke, 'you'll make up your mind to't a bit better when you've seen everything. You'll get used to it. That's what my mother says about her shortness of breath. She says she's made friends wi't now, though she fought again' it sore when it first come on. She's made friends wi't now!'

Or take the stateliest fact of all. There is the fact of God. Lying on my desk at this moment is the *Life of John Haime,* the friend of John Wesley and one of the pioneers of Methodism. In the opening pages, he tells us of his earliest religious impressions. 'I was hastening to eternal destruction,' he says, 'when the great tremendous God met me as a lion in the way.'

As a lion in the way!

As if a man did flee *from a lion!* says the prophet.

John Haime tried to evade the majestic fact that had rushed out upon him. And the more he sought to elude it, the more alarmed he became. 'I had no rest day or night,' he says. 'I was afraid to go to bed. I was afraid to shut my eyes. I was terrified in my sleep by dreadful dreams.'

Afraid! Afraid! Terrified! If only somebody

could take poor John Haime and compel him, as John Broadbanks compelled 'Brownie,' to face the object of his apprehensions! And, happily for John Haime and for the world, somebody did! John Bunyan did. For among some old books which he found at Highworth, in Wiltshire, John Haime came upon a copy of Bunyan's *Grace Abounding.* In reading it he caught a clearer view of God and dismissed his fears. 'God,' he says, 'was pleased to reveal Himself in a most comfortable manner to my soul. The words, *"I have loved thee with an everlasting love"* made so strong an impression on my heart that I was left without a doubt. Immediately my soul melted within me and I was filled with joy unspeakable.'

'I was afraid! I was afraid! I was afraid'—what is this but the horror that overtakes the man who refuses to face his facts?

'God was pleased to reveal Himself to me: my soul melted and I was filled with joy unspeakable'—what is this but the happiness of the man who, having faced the facts that he once vainly struggled to evade, finds in them, instead of horror and alarm, nothing but peace and confidence and joy? Like Samson, he has faced his lion, and, like Samson, he has found sweetness and sustenance where he once expected only bitterness and destruction.

II

'AS A THICK CLOUD!'

I

Out among the vast fir and pine forests of Northern Ontario is a clearing, and, in the clearing, a Red Indian encampment. The great open space is dotted with tawny wigwams, each carpeted with brightly-coloured mats and hung with rich bead-work of many hues. The squaws are busy at the fires; children scamper hither and thither or sprawl on the wigwam floors; whilst the braves, in all the glory of feathers and moccasins, are employed in various ways. Some of them are attending to the horses; others are repairing the canoes which they have brought up from the river bank near by; whilst still others are arranging the traps and furs. As we gaze upon this pageant of western life, there emerges from one of the tents a figure that seems to be no part of the picture. She is a young English lady of fair skin, graceful form and quiet, genteel bearing. Moved by the love of Christ, she has left the comforts of a beautiful English home, that she may tell the story of the Cross to these untaught and untamed children of the prairie and the forest. And they, in their turn, have grown fond of her, and have

given her a pretty Indian name, and have made her promise to abide always in their wigwams. Because she seems with her soft hands to have brushed away the dark clouds that intervened between them and the bright heavens above, they have called her *The Clear Blue Sky* or *The Queen of the Blue*. It is years since I first heard the story, but to-day I find it strangely suggestive and significant.

2

For I am going to preach to-morrow on that tremendous and exultant outburst which is the very climax and culmination of Isaiah's wild, seraphic song:

'Sing, O ye heavens! Shout, O ye valleys! Break forth into music, O ye forests and mountains! for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob! I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins!'

'As a cloud!'

'As a thick cloud!'

Sitting in the solitudes of the great New Zealand bush one summer's evening, watching the rainbow effects produced by the sunset on the spray of a magnificent waterfall, the conversation somehow turned to our earliest religious impressions.

'I remember, as a child,' said John Broadbanks, 'puzzling about the forgiveness of sins. In the midst of my perplexity my mother entered the room.

She took her seat beside the fire, and, creeping to her knee, I told her of the thoughts that had bewildered me. She reached across to the table and took my sister's slate, with sponge attached, that had been lying there. It was covered with strokes and pot-hooks. My mother wiped them all out. "And now," she asked, *"where are they?"* I could not tell. *"That,"* she added, "is how God wipes out our sins. He blots them out of existence!" '

It evidently made a profound impression upon John at the time; and, as he told me the story that summer's evening, I was very interested; but to-day it fails to satisfy me. For there is all the difference in the universe between a slip on a slate and a smudge on the sky!

'As a cloud!'

'As a thick cloud!'

The man who has sinned against God feels that he has darkened the very heavens! He has shut himself off from all the lights that shine! For him there is no sun to illumine his path by day; no moon nor stars to brighten his night! His life is shadowed! His soul is under a cloud!

'As a thick cloud—thy transgressions!'

'As a cloud—thy sins!'

Therein lies the essential horror of it. Like a black cloud intervening between me and the sunlight, my sin intervenes between my trembling soul and the brightness of heaven itself? It is a smudge on the

sky! That is what David meant when he cried in his agony: *'Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned!'* That is what the prodigal meant when he exclaimed: *'I have sinned against heaven and before Thee!'* That is what John Bunyan felt most keenly. 'It was this,' he tells us, 'that would almost kill my heart: *my sin was point-blank against my Saviour!*' Not all the slate hidden in a million quarries could express the blackness of a single sin. It is a blot on the blue.

'Against Thee, Thee only!'

'I have sinned against heaven!'

'My sin was point-blank against my Saviour!'

'A cloud—a thick cloud!'

That is what they all felt, this prophet of an olden time, these Indians of yesterday, and a great cloud of witnesses filling up the gap between. They felt that the very heavens were lowering and gloomy with their transgressions; and only those who have shared the wretchedness of such an experience will understand the rapture that afterwards was theirs.

3

'Canst thou understand the spreading of the clouds?' asks Job; and, as he twice propounds the problem, I assume that he found some difficulty in finding any one capable of answering it. I am not surprised. 'I really believe,' observes Ruskin, 'that some of the mysteries of the clouds never will be

understood by us at all.' In this realm of wonder and uncertainty, however, I find that two things are clear.

The *first* is that a cloud consists of myriads of infinitesimal particles of moisture arising from the earth beneath.

The *second* is that those particles only become visible at a great altitude and in combination.

At this moment I wish to know nothing more. I dare say that the things that are obscure would, if they were made plain, throw a wealth of illumination upon the prophet's rapturous proclamation; but, in the meantime, I feel that I have as much light as my eyes can bear. The earth is perpetually exhaling particles of vapour that, rising and combining, form the clouds that smear my sky!

'As a thick cloud—thy transgressions!'

'As a cloud—thy sins!'

The prophet's meaning becomes startlingly clear. When I have thought of my sins and my transgressions, I have thought of a few of the most daring enormities of which, in special seasons of passion or forgetfulness, I have become shamefully guilty. But, now that I come to think of it, such offences carry their own condemnation. Their obvious wickedness hurries the delinquent to penitence or remorse. They are like stones thrown at the stars; they fall back of their own gravity. And a cloud is not made up of stones! I see now that, every

moment of my life, I have been unconsciously giving off exhalations of thought and speech and feeling and behaviour which, scarcely perceptible at the time, are rising and combining and forming the clouds that must eventually blot out the very sky! These particles only become visible, the scientists tell me, at a great altitude above the source from which they sprang.

4

But they *do* eventually become visible, as we all know to our cost. Sooner or later we wake up and find that our sky is clouded. We cannot recall the particles that have made up the overhanging gloom; they have gone from us and gone for ever! We cannot remove them: they are beyond our reach! But there they are!

'As a thick cloud—thy transgressions!'

'As a cloud—thy sins!'

And so it comes to pass that I find myself living a clouded life. I walk, day after day, under grey and gloomy skies. I may be on the crest of prosperity's wave; I may have all that heart can wish; my companions may be wonderfully kind; but there is something hanging over me all the time. Nothing is more dispiriting, more depressing, more deadening. It disqualifies a man for life's most splendid adventures. Nobody has portrayed this side of things more pointedly or more pathetically than has

Tennyson. In all the Court of King Arthur there was no braver knight than Sir Percivale. He was one of the brightest ornaments of the Round Table. And when the most hazardous of all the exploits of the knights was mooted—the Quest of the Holy Grail—Sir Percivale was among the first to offer. We remember how the King, the Queen, the knights, and all the ladies wept as Sir Percivale rode forth from the gates of Camelot upon his daring mission. But he had not gone far when strange thoughts seized upon his mind. The Holy Grail! Who was *he* that he should go in search of the Holy Grail?

> Then every evil word I had spoken once,
> And every evil thought I had thought of old,
> And every evil deed I ever did,
> Awoke and cried, 'This quest is not for thee!'

He found himself, as he himself puts it, under a 'driving gloom!' All this 'came like a driving gloom across my mind.' The cloud, composed of those minute exhalations of his previous life which, at the time, seemed small and unimportant, shadowed his soul in the day that beckoned him to lofty enterprise. I often meet people who tell me that they make no profession of religion. I sometimes fancy that, lying behind their statement, I catch a suspicion of wistfulness. In their heart of hearts, they would love to set out in quest of the Holy Grail. But they have heard the voices that paralysed Sir Percivale.

They have been shadowed by 'the driving gloom.' They feel that life is clouded.

'As a thick cloud—thy transgressions!'

'As a cloud—thy sins!'

Life has its phases. There is a time when the cloud is not unwelcome. We do not want God. Like Adam, we are not sorry to be hidden. But the years bring wisdom. With Sir Percivale we feel that the cloud is a deadening affair. With Job we cry *'Oh, that I knew where I might find him!'* With Solomon we feel that *'truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun!'* But, until the cloud, the thick cloud, is removed, that sweetness can never be ours.

5

The question is: Can it be removed? And that question reminds me that I just now began a quotation from *Grace Abounding* and did not finish it. 'It was this,' says John Bunyan, 'that would almost kill my heart: My sin was point-blank against my Saviour? My sin was bigger than the sins of a country, of a kingdom, or of the whole world. Not one of my sins was pardonable. No other sin could equal mine; mine outwent them every one. I found it in my mind to flee from God, as from the face of a dreadful Judge; yet this was my torment that I could not escape His hand! But, blessed be his grace, that Scripture, in these flying fits, would call,

as running after me: *"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sin!"* This, I say, would come upon my mind when I was fleeing from the face of God. Indeed, it would make me stop, and, as it were, look over my shoulder behind me to see if I could discern that the God of grace did follow me with a pardon in His hand!'

'Blotted out—thy transgressions!'

'Blotted out—thy sins!'

The cloud is made from *beneath:* it can only be dispelled from *above.* The forgiveness of earth is the triumph of heaven. Only one hand, and that a pierced hand, can wipe the smudge from heaven's eternal blue!

6

On a heavy, cloudy afternoon, not long ago, I was sitting on a lovely and extensive lawn. I was impressed by the silence. A gloomy hush seemed to have enveloped everything. But, an hour later, the wind changed; a cool breeze swept across the park; the glassy surface of the lake broke into ripples; through a rift in the clouds the sun shone out. Almost at once I was aware of the chirping of insects in the grass; a thrush began to pour his blithest notes from a giant elm near by; a blackbird in the fir tree answered him. As soon as the clouds vanished, the melody began. Of course!

'Sing, O ye heavens! Shout, O ye valleys! break

forth into music, O ye forests and mountains! for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob! I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud, thy sins!'

The coming of the sunshine makes the world a gay and lovable place. Life stands transfigured when the clouds go and the sunshine comes. That is why the Indians, up among the prairies and the forests of Ontario, treated the gentle white lady with such grateful deference. And that is why they called her *The Queen of the Blue!*

7

When James Hannington found himself sitting by the dying embers of his last camp-fire in Uganda, heroically awaiting the savage blow that so soon ended his brief pathetic life, he scrawled on a tattered scrap of paper a last message to his friends in England:

'If,' it reads, 'this be the last chapter of my earthly history, then the next will be the first page of the heavenly—no blots, no smudges, no incoherence, but sweet converse in the presence of the Lamb.'

'No blots!'

'No smudges!'

All the clouds swept from the sky!

Heaven's eternal blue!

III

RED ROSES

Red Roses!

A wreath of *red roses!*

I never saw anything finer! I was standing at the window on Monday morning, in a sleepy sort of way, when, all at once, this ineffable glory surprised me. It stabbed my spirit broad awake. A young girl, neatly attired in grey, came up the opposite side of the street, carrying, with evident care, a most beautiful wreath of red roses. I called everybody in the house to admire it. I was glad that I had seen this exquisite thing from the safe observatory of the window. Had I been out upon the pavement, or even in the garden, the courtesies of life would have compelled me to curb my raptures and moderate my enthusiasm. Even if I had been able to gather the other members of the household, we should have been under the necessity of glancing furtively, admiring surreptitiously, and expressing our delight in smothered whispers.

But the window gave our eyes and lips full liberty. We could stare to our hearts' content, and talk with the utmost freedom. On one point we were all agreed: we had never seen anything quite as gorgeous before. On another point we were all at sixes

and sevens. What was it for? In honor of what occasion had it been prepared? It could not be a wedding; it could not be a funeral! Each of us hazarded a guess, and no guess satisfied anybody but the guesser.

'I've a very good mind to run across and ask her!' exclaimed one member of the company. But, like most of the things that we have a very good mind to do, it was never done. The girl vanished round the corner; we returned to our several tasks; the romance of red roses soon yielded to the drab tints of the commonplace.

But, after the fashion of such trivial episodes, the red roses set me thinking. And nobody who has paid any heed to my references to John Broadbanks will wonder that they set me thinking of *him*. For John was passionately devoted to his roses. As you entered the gate of the Silverstream Manse you passed up a glorious avenue of standard roses; and each tree seemed to whisper of the tenderness and affection that were constantly lavished upon it. I have known John leave the fireside on a bitter winter's night, when the wind was whistling round the house and the sleet lashing the window-panes, in order that he might make sure that one of his precious rose-trees was properly sheltered and protected. He seldom came over to Mosgiel without bringing a few choice blooms; and his eyes sparkled with pride as he fondly surveyed his beauties.

Such devotion is contagious. We soon began to feel that we should like to grow a few roses at Mosgiel. I told John so, and asked his advice as to the varieties to be ordered.

'I thought,' I added, 'that it would be nice to have two white roses near the gate, and then——'

'My dear fellow,' he broke in, 'take my advice and have nothing but *red* roses to start with. Later on, if you feel so inclined, you can exchange one or two of them for roses of other colours. But start with red! Red always satisfies. A red rose is a real rose, a rich rose, a rosy rose! The more redness you see in your garden, the better you'll like it. Unless you're going in for roses on a really tremendous scale, be guided by me and begin with nothing but red!'

The more I ponder that fine phrase of John's, the more it pleases me. *A red rose is a rosy rose!* He might, without doing violence to truth, have gone one step further. He might have said that *a red rose is the only rose.* It is the only perfectly natural rose. If the sunshine had its own way, *all* the flowers would be red. But, happily, we none of us get our own way—not even the sunshine. A multitude of modifying and qualifying factors get to work, neutralizing and nullifying the direct effects of the sunshine; and so it comes to pass that we have flowers that are blue and white and yellow. But red is Nature's colour. When a flower is red, it is because she has had her own way with it; when it is some

other colour, it is because her movements have been hampered.

In our inmost hearts we all feel that *a red rose is the only rose.* It is the only rose of which we think when we describe a thing as *rosy.* My dictionary has a host of words gathered from a rose-garden—*roseate, rose-coloured, rosaniline, rosy, and so on.* But you can see with half an eye that, when these words were minted, the coiners were thinking of no roses but red roses. I have just re-read *Felix Holt.* In the early part of the book, George Eliot speaks of rose-coloured furnishings; in the middle of it she speaks of rose-coloured blushes; and, towards the end, she speaks of rose-coloured satin. We all understand her. When we speak of *rosy* lips, we do not mean white lips or yellow lips; we mean red lips —lips like the petals of a red, red rose. When we speak of *rosy* cheeks, we do not mean pale cheeks, blanched cheeks, sickly cheeks; we mean cheeks burning with indignation or suffused with blushes. When we speak of the *rosy* dawn, we think of the East as flushed with crimson. And when a boy talks about a *rosy* apple—but why multiply examples?

It was ever so. 'I learned at school,' Dean Hole tells us, 'that Aurora had *rosy* fingers. I always thought of her as one who had been among the strawberries; and I envied her accordingly. And the dean goes on to show that the sentimental poetry of the ancients is plentifully punctuated with refer-

ences to *rosy* arms, *rosy* necks, *rosy* feet, and so on. To these old writers, as to John Broadbanks, *the red rose was the rosy rose*. Indeed, the red rose was the only rose. They quite forgot, in the ecstasy of their inspiration, that there were roses that were not red.

But I must be careful. My eulogy of red roses may excite the jealousy and the animosity of roses of other hues. The loveliest and gentlest things on the planet are capable of the most implacable hatred; and, before to-day, even the roses have divided themselves into hostile camps and glared savagely at each other across the intervening chasm. The tale is not a glorious one; and we recall it without an atom of pride. Indeed, it is one of the bitter ironies of history that has sentenced us to speak of the wretched feuds of the houses of York and Lancaster as the Wars of the Roses. Nowhere else has a struggle so squalid been associated with an emblem so beautiful. 'There are few periods in our annals,' Green declares, 'from which we turn with such weariness and disgust as from the Wars of the Roses. Their savage battles, their ruthless executions, their shameless treasons seem all the more terrible from the pure selfishness of the ends for which men fought, the utter want of all nobleness and chivalry in the struggle itself, and of all great result in its close.' The historian estimates that this miserable strife, if it did not destroy English freedom, at least arrested its progress for more than a hundred years. A sad

blot, this, on the escutcheon of the rose. But both the white rose and the red rose have retrieved their characters since then. With the *white* rose I am not concerned just now; I may apply myself to that enticing theme in another chapter. But everybody who has been in London on Rose Day knows that the *red* rose, at least, has raised its beauteous head above the ignominy of that old-time squabble.

We Britons turn our button-holes into signal stations. We have developed an almost Oriental genius for associating the thought of a flower with that of a distinguished personage or a great cause. We turn our button-holes into semaphores, and express our sentiments, our attachments, our politics or our patriotism by means of the flowers that we wear in our coats. The vogue of the primrose in Imperial politics was so preponderating that it will be many a long year before we shall be able to look upon that modest flower without recalling the days when Beaconsfield and Gladstone were the protagonists upon whom all eyes were turned. Once a year, too, we Australians express our affection for these great southern lands by wearing a sprig of wattle in our button-holes. And on a certain midsummer day in England it is 'roses, roses all the way.' On that day, the people of the mother country display their characteristic love of roses, their reverent affection for the late Queen Alexandra, and their practical sympathy with the beneficent work of the great hospitals

by a perfect carnival of pink button-holes. Millions and millions of flowers are prepared for the commemoration. The prosaic old thoroughfares of London are at once a riot of colour, a brilliant pageant of pink blossoms. And thus the red rose, repudiating its ancient stain, associates itself with thoughts of chivalry and loyalty and pity.

But we must go a little deeper. A red rose always gives you the impression that it holds a secret. A mystery is concealed within its shapely folds. That accounts for our bewilderment when the girl with the wreath of red roses turned the corner and left us guessing. What do red roses signify? What occasion do they fit? They seem overflowing with eloquent speech; but what is it that they are saying? We are like people who, listening to a lovely singer, enjoy the melody, but fail to catch the words. In one of his shorter poems, Mr. Ralph Hodgson hints at something of the kind. He is puzzled by the riddle of the red, red roses. They are so elusive, so secretive, so mysterious! Yes, so mysterious; for the poem is entitled *The Mystery:*

He came and took me by the hand
  Up to a red rose tree,
He kept His meaning to Himself,
  And gave a rose to me.

I did not pray Him to lay bare
  The mystery to me ;
Enough the rose was heaven to smell
  And His own face to see.

That is very beautiful; but it does not entirely satisfy us. For it leaves us still in doubt as to the meaning and message of the rose.

Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes thinks that red roses stand for youth, gaiety, vitality. The *Autocrat,* as an old man, is thinking of the girls who were girls when he was a boy. 'The beauties of my recollection,' he says, 'where are they? They have run the gauntlet of years as well as I. First the years pelted them with *red roses* till their cheeks were all on fire. By and by they began throwing *white roses,* and that morning-flush passed away. At last one of the years threw a *snow-ball,* and after that no year let the poor girls pass without throwing snow-balls. And then came rougher missiles, ice and stones; and from time to time an arrow whistled, and down went one of the poor girls. So there are but few left; and we don't call those few *girls,* but——' And so on. This does not carry us far, but it gives us a hint; and the hint is worth following. The red rose stands for youth, the *Autocrat* tells us. That being so, why not go another step along the same alluring road? May not the message of the red, red roses be a message of *perpetual* youth? Has not Wordsworth told us as much?

> From town to town, from tower to tower,
> The red rose is a gladsome flower,
> She lifts her head for endless spring,
> For everlasting blossoming.

But I left unfinished the story with which I began —the story of the girl who, on Monday morning, delighted and bewildered us with her luxurious wreath of red roses. It happened that, for Monday afternoon, I had no engagements. It suddenly flashed upon me that it was the birthday of Wilbur Brightwell, one of the truest, noblest, staunchest friends man ever had. Had he lived, he would have been fifty on Monday. But he did *not* live; he was smitten suddenly at forty-seven.

'We have often talked of visiting his grave at High Peak Cemetery,' I said to the mistress of the Manse, 'why not go to-day?' She agreed at once, and, woman-like, raised the question of taking flowers.

'If I had *my* way,' I replied, with our morning's experience fresh in my mind, 'I would take a big bunch of red roses; Wilbur hated anything funereal. He once told me that it would impart a real terror to death if he thought that the church would be draped with black hangings and the grave covered with white flowers. And you remember that, at Dr. George Matheson's funeral, the students of Edinburgh University carried an enormous wreath of red roses.'

'Ah, but there was a special reason for *that*,' reasoned my companion. 'It was intended as a reference to the lines in Dr. Matheson's hymn:

> From the ground there blossoms red
> Life that shall endless be.'

On reflection, we agreed that red roses might seem too daring and we compromised by deciding on violets.

Bathed in sunshine High Peak Cemetery looked very beautiful on Monday. It seemed to be flooded with hope and brightness—the hope and brightness of immortality. The gloom of the grave was gone. Yet one thing palled upon us. On tomb after tomb we saw the most lovely flowers; but always *white* flowers. There were wreaths and crosses and anchors everywhere; but *white* wreaths and *white* crosses and *white* anchors! We felt depressed by the pallid and deathly monotony of white, and were glad that we ourselves had brought violets. But somebody else had done even better. Wilbur's resting-place is marked by a tall and stately obelisk. We approached it from behind. We knew, as we drew near, that he lay on the far side of it. With soft and reverent footsteps we passed round the massive granite monument. Never shall I forget the thrill that immediately followed. For there, on Wilbur's grave, we saw once more that gorgeous wreath of roses! The girl in grey must have been on her way to the home of the Brightwells when she passed our window!

I could have shouted for the joy of it! After the wilderness of white, that wreath of red roses was like a rapturous burst of triumph. It was as though I had suddenly heard the Hallelujah Chorus!

'I would have given something for a banner or two,' says Sir Edward Burne-Jones, in deploring the cheerless and disconsolate atmosphere that prevailed at Browning's funeral, 'and much would I have given if a chorister had emerged from the triforium and rent the air with a trumpet!'

That is precisely what the roses did on Monday afternoon. They were like so many bright banners waving proudly! They were like the triumphant blast of innumerable trumpets! They challenged the grim finality of death; they defied the majesty of the tomb. They sent *Hosannahs* and *Hallelujahs* reverberating among all the wreaths and anchors and crosses; and they awoke a vibration of life and hope in every green and silent mound.

IV

WHITE ROSES

I CONFESS with shame that for years I never passed Alan Hedcroft's home without thinking hard thoughts concerning him. Alan lives in Gresham Avenue; and Gresham Avenue is noted for its fine houses and beautiful gardens. It is a rapture to the eye to walk along it. As you do so, however, you come upon one residence that is completely shut in. A fence fully seven feet high protects both house and garden from public scrutiny. After the charming panorama of graceful lawns and lovely flower-beds to which the passer-by has become accustomed, this plain fence makes him feel like a railway passenger who, after feasting his eyes on green woods and golden cornfields, suddenly plunges into the blackness of a tunnel.

For a long time I somehow imagined that the ugly fence was designed to hide the barrenness behind it. I did not know Alan Hedcroft in those days; had, indeed, never even heard his name. And, although I cannot tell how the idea first came to me, I always thought of the space between the fence and the front door as an empty yard or a tangle of shrubs—a wilderness that the owner lacked either the time or the inclination to beautify. But one day, just before

I passed the house, somebody had entered or left without closing the gate behind him. The consequence was that I enjoyed a clear view of the domain that, until then, had been closely veiled from me. And, to my utter astonishment, I beheld the most beautiful garden in the entire avenue! The perfectly-kept lawns were intersected by gracefully-winding walks, each of which was flanked on either side by a glorious display of roses. And the thing that struck me at once was the fact that, without an exception, all the roses were *white* roses! It was the most exquisite collection of white roses that I had ever seen. In the High Court of my inner judgement, I acquitted the owner of the house of being *slatternly* and charged him, instead, with being *selfish;* and I continued my homeward journey pondering the fresh problem which this unexpected discovery had so abruptly presented.

Three months later a tall gentleman in grey—a man of about sixty—was leaving the church one Sunday when he handed me his card.

'If you have time to look in one evening,' he remarked pleasantly, 'I shall be very glad of a chat.'

I promised to call, and, as soon as he had gone, carefully examined the card. *'Mr. Alan Hedcroft, Culverden Lodge, Gresham Avenue.'* Culverden Lodge was the name on the gate at the end of the high fence—the gate through which I had glimpsed such a paradise of white roses!

We soon became very friendly; although it was a long time before he took me into his confidence and gratified my curiosity concerning the tall fence and the white roses.

It was a still summer evening; not a breath was stirring; and the setting sun was throwing grotesquely long shadows across the soft velvety lawn. With fond and reverent hands, Alan had just cut a perfect specimen of the *Marchioness of Londonderry* and an almost equally handsome *Margaret Dickson*. He handed me the blossoms for inspection.

'But why all *white?*' I asked. 'You haven't a single tree of another colour!'

He went on smoking his cigar, gathering a rose here and a rose there as though he had not heard me. When we entered the house a few minutes later he arranged the snowy blossoms very tastefully in a bowl and placed it on the piano, not far from the portrait of his dead wife.

'You asked me,' he said, as he put the finishing touches to the flowers, 'you asked me why I grew no roses but white ones.' Stepping across to his side of the room, I noticed that he was gazing, not at the blooms, but at the portrait. 'They were *her* favourites,' he went on. 'It was a constant grief to her that we had no children; and, in their absence, she simply lived for her white roses. She seldom went out without taking a handful of white roses to some-

body.' He paused for a moment, in the course of which his mind swung to the companion mystery—the high fence.

'That's why I have the big fence in front,' he continued. 'Perhaps it's wrong; and I've half made up my mind to remove it. But I don't grow the white roses for *everybody's eyes* to see; nor even for *your* eyes and *mine*. I grow them for *her;* and you'd be surprised how often it seems to me that she walks beside me of an evening admiring the blooms that seemed to her so unutterably sweet!'

I was ashamed of the thoughts that I had so often harboured in passing Culverden Lodge. It shows how impossible it is to judge things from the outside. As I sat beside the fire last night I was reading a book by Professor Oman. On one of its pages I came upon a sentence that haunted my fancy for an hour afterwards. *Love,* he says, *cannot be interpreted from the outside*. The professor is speaking of the divine love; but there is no need to limit the scope of his wise words. I saw a thing the other afternoon that greatly interested me. I was present at a performance of *The Merchant of Venice*. The great auditorium was packed with boys and girls from the public schools. These youngsters applauded the tragic and dramatic passages to the echo. But, in the last act, we came to the love-scene between Lorenzo and Jessica. It was rendered with exquisite taste and charm and delicacy and tenderness and pas-

sion. If the building had been filled with married men and women, or with young men and maidens, there would probably have been few dry eyes among the spectators. As it was, the performance was ruined by the hilarious laughter of these schoolboys and schoolgirls. To them, love looked ludicrous. They were interpreting it, as Professor Oman would say, from the outside. All the vital things of life, to be understood, must be experienced. Men judge the church from the outside; they judge the faith from the outside; they judge the kingdom of heaven from the outside. It is like the judgement of the boys and girls at *The Merchant of Venice:* it is like my own judgement as I passed repeatedly under the high fence in front of Culverden Lodge. It is a blind and worthless judgement.

I never realized the eloquence of flowers until I formed the friendship of Alan Hedcroft. The better I knew him the more I realized that his white roses actually talked to him. Sometimes, perhaps, there was a tinge of sadness in the things they whispered; but far more often they comforted, strengthened, and inspired him. Many of the finest things he did —and he seemed to me to be perpetually occupied with noble deeds—were suggested to him by the roses. In his *Book About Roses,* Dean Hole has a good deal to say concerning this real and effective eloquence of flowers. 'A friend of mine,' he says, 'a lady who is much among the poor in the east of

London, took a bunch of primroses to a miserable attic, and placed it on the table. The woman who occupied the room gazed for a moment at the flowers; and then, overpowered by the memory of happier, purer days, she burst into tears!'

That is one of the biggest and best things about us. We are able to interpret in an *intellectual* sense, and apply in an *ethical* sense, the speech of silent things. This mystic faculty of ours explains our passion for decorations. There are times when we cannot express ourselves in words; so we avail ourselves of floral eloquence. At a funeral we express our *sympathy* in flowers: at a wedding we voice our *felicitations* in the same way. A member of this little household of mine recently left us for a week or two. On the night of her home-coming, everybody was simmering with joyous excitement. How could we tell her of our happiness at her return? We made her bedroom one huge bouquet of roses!

A curious sidelight on this passion for decoration is afforded by the circumstance that the craving, or one very like it, betrays itself among the birds of the forest at their highest and their best. The most striking illustration is provided by our own Australian bower-bird. The bower is tastefully decorated with feathers, shells, bones, leaves, and other adornments. In his *Handbook to the Birds of Australia,* Mr. B. A. Gould says that he found in one of these bowers a neatly-worked stone tomahawk and a slip

of blue cotton, evidently procured from a native encampment. Many of the bowers are beautifully lined with tall grasses, and with berries of various colours—blue, red, and black; the whole showing a decided taste for the beautiful. Another singular instance of a passion for decoration in wild life is furnished by the mot-mot, which, Mr. O. Salvin assures us, deliberately bites off the barbs of his tail feathers in order to produce that peculiar racket-shaped effect for which the bird is noted. And goldfinches have been known to line the edges of their nests with dainty garlands of forget-me-nots. Now what have we here? What is this that the bower-birds, the mot-mots, and the goldfinches are trying to teach us?

In one of his sparkling essays, Emerson argues that this fondness of ours for floral decoration is a delicate and unconscious tribute that we pay to the infinite, the invisible, the beyond. It is the point at which we stand on the confines of the *material* and gaze wistfully out into the realms of the *spiritual*. It is the jumping-off place from which we set out to invade another world. However squalid may be our condition, we like to display a little something, over and above the bare necessities of the case, for purposes of ornament, and for the purposes of ornament alone.

But then, what about the birds? How are we to harmonize *their* behaviour with our Emersonian doctrine? There is no difficulty. The decorations

of these dainty nest-builders represent Nature's struggle towards the spiritual. *They* go no farther, whilst *Man* goes very much farther. They are like the momentary leap of a salmon into the air, or like the momentary dive of a bird into the sea. The fish cannot soar; but it loves, for just a second, to invade another element. The bird cannot swim; but it delights in spending a moment beneath the waves. Nature sometimes makes a plunge towards the invisible; and, though it is only fugitive and fitful, it is very interesting and suggestive. But, in that realm towards which she struggles, like a bird beating against the bars or a bee against the pane, Man lives and moves and has his constant being. He decorates for every occasion, sad or glad. By means of a flower he says what no rhetoric could express. When Victoria, the girl-queen, desired to let the future Prince Consort understand that his advances would be acceptable to her, she gave him a white rose. Instantly cutting a slit in his uniform, next his heart, he wore the rose there all the evening, and the action of each was perfectly interpreted by the other.

But the white roses have a still more personal and a still more practical message. There was a time when, once a year, a white rose in a silver casket was presented to the English King. And who is this, on his knees, making the presentation? It is the Earl of Lincoln. Having incurred the dis-

pleasure of the Court, the Lincoln estates had been forfeited. And when, later on, they were restored to their ancient owners, the Earls of Lincoln were required to present a white rose to the King every year as a recognition of the fact that they held their estates only by the royal clemency. The Crown did not insist on confiscation so long as, by the presentation of the white rose, they acknowledged their obligation.

In hospitals and similar places, I have seen little posies of flowers with texts attached to them. After reflecting on this story of the Earls of Lincoln it seems to me that the white rose, at any rate, needs no such tag. History has already attached a text to it. *'What,' the white rose seems to say, 'What! know ye not that ye are not your own?' That* was what the white rose said to the Earls of Lincoln; *that* is what it says to us all. And it is the very thing that we most easily forget.

Ye are not your own, says the White Rose. In every clause and syllable, the very law of the land declares as much. It affirms that a man belongs to the State. The State autocratically demands, under terrific penalties, that we shall each live our lives according to a certain standard and conform to certain prescribed codes. In a thousand ways the State lays claim to the possession of absolute property in each of its citizens. It is all very well for a man to say that he will invest his time and talents to his own

advantage by placing them on the best market. But what of the proceeds? The proceeds are at the mercy of the State. The Income Tax Commissioner will tell him how much he must surrender, and how much he may keep. And, like the white rose in the silver casket, every penny that the Commissioner exacts is an unequivocal recognition, on the part of the man who pays it, that the State has a perfect right to all that he is and all that he has. If the Commissioner can take a penny, he can take a pound.

But this is largely negative and tentative. By what title and authority do I belong to the State? By what deed or right can my fellowmen claim property in me? Who gave them that power? In a word, whose am I? If I am not my own, to whom do I, in the last resort, belong? And that is the very question that the White Rose answers. *What!* it exclaims, *know ye not that ye are not your own? for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God with your body and your spirit which are His.*

Bought with a price! And, at that reminder of the world's redemption, *red* roses seem to mingle with the *white* ones. The *red roses* tell of the sacrifice that has been offered to make me His; the *white* ones, in their silver caskets, whisper of the debt I must for ever owe Him.

V

DUSTY

I

It is May Day morning, and on May Day morning I always think of Dusty. For it was on May Day morning that I saw him for the first time, and it was on May Day morning—exactly a year later—that I saw the last of him. I shall never forget that introduction. I remember how surprised I was at being recognized, for I was a long way from home. In the course of an extensive motor tour we had paused for lunch at a small wayside inn back among the hills. As I rose from table, and stepped out into the roadway, a tall and bearded man—a typical Australian farmer—approached and addressed me by name.

'I thought so,' he said, when I acknowledged my identity. 'I heard you once years ago; but I shouldn't have spoken but that I have, up at the farm, an Irish boy who is very ill. He worked his passage out from the Old Country a year or two ago and tramped his way through the country looking for work. He was just about dead-beat by the time he arrived at Braebanks; the wife and girls took pity on him and begged me to give him a job; he took

bad a few weeks ago, and has been getting worse ever since. There's no minister up in these parts, and I wondered if it would be too much trouble for you to run up to Braebanks and have a look at him.'

Dusty, as they all called him, was a lad of about nineteen, with a great shock of auburn hair, a very florid complexion, and laughing, roguish eyes. I had a pleasant talk with him, and, before leaving, read him a few verses from my pocket Bible. In doing so, a little card, which I used as a book-mark, fluttered to the floor. It was just a card that one of the children had brought home from Sunday school; it represented a robin sitting on a bough, and, underneath, the words: *All His saints are in Thy hand.* Dusty caught sight of it and asked if he might see it.

'It reminds a fellow of home!' he said, as he looked at the redbreast. And then, reading the words aloud, he asked their meaning.

'It just means,' I answered, 'that all those who are trusting the Saviour in the way that I described just now are in God's hand. He holds them fast and keeps them safe.'

'What, *all* of them?' he asked, in surprise.

'It says so,' I answered, pointing to the first word on the card.

'My! what a handful!' he exclaimed, with a pleasant twinkle in his eyes, 'what a hand He must have, mustn't He?'

I left the card lying on his pillow and promised that, if it were possible, I would come and see him again. I was twice at Braebanks after that. Once, a few months later, I motored up for another talk with Dusty; and once, when May Day came again, I journeyed up to bury him. On the occasion of that third visit to his room, I caught sight, just in time, of the card standing on the mantelpiece. I crossed to the coffin, gave Dusty's forehead a reverent stroke of farewell, and laid the card upon his breast.

2

Even as I sit here at my desk to-day I see again the sparkle of delight that came into Dusty's deep blue eyes when, in reply to his question, I pointed to the first word on the card. *All* His saints! I knew the thoughts that were surging in his heart. Whenever an Australian minister is called to the bedside of a sick immigrant, he knows that he will soon be talking to a homesick man. All the oceans of the world were rolling between Dusty and Dusty's people. Just when his heart was most hungry for a mother's voice and a mother's caress he was tortured by the tyranny of the countless leagues between. I understood. Most of us on this side of the world have trodden that heartbreaking path at some time or other. Dusty told me, when I went to see him for the second time, of the village down in County Clare,

from which his thirst for adventure had drawn him. He described the cottage, the garden, and fields, the school and the church; and he talked of the dear, dear faces he had left behind him. It was when his thoughts took that far flight that the first word of the text soothed and comforted him.

> Peace, perfect peace—with loved ones far away.
> In Jesus' keeping we are safe—and they !

All His saints! *All* in His hand! Dusty liked to think of that, and he hoped that some such thoughts would flit through the minds of the folk in County Clare whenever they thought of him. He gave me their address before I left, and I promised to write and tell them of the conversation that I have here recorded.

'They're Catholics, you know,' he said, a little timidly, as though afraid that this fact might make some dreadful difference. 'They're Catholics, and I'm supposed to be. But I haven't been near any church since I left home, and you're the first minister I've spoken to since Father O'Brien saw me off at the station.'

I smiled and pointed again to the first word on the card. *All* His saints! I told him that some of the men and women whom I loved best were of the same faith as his parents. As he was tired with talking, I took the opportunity of doing my share. I told him my debt to Francis of Assisi, to Santa Teresa, to Francis Xavier, to Bernard of Clairvaux,

and to Sister Clare. I told him that some of the choicest hymns in my own hymn-book were written by priests of his Church. By way of illustration I quoted—for reasons of my own—from Faber's best-known verses:

O come to the merciful Saviour who calls you,
  O come to the Lord who forgives and forgets;
Though dark be the fortune on earth that befalls you,
  There's a bright home above where the sun never sets.

Come, come to His feet and lay open your story
  Of suffering and sorrow, of guilt and of shame;
For the pardon of sin is the crown of His glory,
  And the joy of our Lord to be true to His name.

O come then to Jesus, whose arms are extended
  To fold His dear children in closest embrace;
O come, for your exile will shortly be ended,
  And Jesus will show you His beautiful face.

At the funeral I told the story of the card. It seemed peculiarly fitting. The great farm kitchen was crowded. The family felt Dusty's death very keenly; one might have fancied, on beholding their grief, that he had been of their own kith and kin. All the men who worked about the place were present: some had brought their wives and children: and several farmers from a distance had driven over. Dusty had evidently captured the hearts of all who knew him. I spoke of the comfort that he had found in the first word on the card. *All* His saints! *All* in His hand!

'And that,' I added, 'is *our* comfort. We do not

know exactly where Dusty is at this minute; but we know that he is in God's hand. Death makes no difference to that. Those who, in the simplicity of faith, placed themselves in God's hand *before* death are still safe in God's hand *after* death. It makes him seem very near, doesn't it? *He* is in God's hand; *we* are in God's hand. *All* His saints—the saints of the Church militant and the saints of the Church triumphant—are there. *All His saints are in His hand.* I laid the card on Dusty's breast yonder, and we must lay the thought to our stricken hearts to-day.'

I told George Macdonald's story of the woman who could not be argued out of her conviction that her sailor-boys were in God's care, and, therefore, perfectly safe. 'But,' reasoned the objector, 'supposing that, for all that you say about their safety, some of your sons were drowned at sea.' 'Well, sir,' she answered with a sigh, 'I trust they are none the less safe for that. It would be a strange thing for an old woman like me to suppose that safety lay in not being drowned. What is the bottom of the sea, sir? The bottom of the sea is the hollow of His hand!' Her sons would still be safe, though they were there! And so, I said, was Dusty.

After our return from the lonely little cemetery on the ridge, we all had tea together in the cavernous kitchen in which the service had been held; and then I started for home. The sun was setting over the

great silent hills as I motored back to town. And, somehow, the further I found myself from the roomy farm-house and the tiny God's acre, the more the words grew upon me. *All His saints are in His hand!*

Saints of the early dawn of Christ,
  Saints of Imperial Rome,
Saints of the cloistered middle age,
  Saints of the modern home;
Saints of the soft and sunny East,
  Saints of the frozen seas,
Saints of the Isles that wave their palms
  In the fair Antipodes;

Saints of the marts and busy streets,
  Saints of the squalid lanes,
Saints of the silent solitudes,
  In the prairies and the plains;
Saints who were wafted to the skies,
  In the torment robe of flame,
Saints who have graven on men's thoughts
  A monumental name.

All in His hand! 'What a handful!' Dusty exclaimed, when first he read the text; and I felt like echoing his words. By this time, the west was a pageant of gold: the sky seemed all aflame: the vision of its splendour became entangled with the thought that was uppermost in my mind. The glory before me seemed to be the glory of the ransomed host—the host that Dusty had now joined. I felt myself speeding towards it—rushing into it—drawn to it as though I were part of it. As, indeed, I was. For that is the beauty of Dusty's text. *All* His

saints—the saints that are separated by the oceans and the saints that are separated by the ages—*all His saints are in His hand.* I shall always associate that shining word with the sparkling eyes of Dusty.

3

One of these days May Day will fall on a Sunday, and when it does there will be but one text possible for me. *All His saints are in His hand.* I have no idea what I shall say about it. Perhaps it will suffice if I tell the story of Dusty, and make a point of frequently repeating the text.

All His saints are in His hand! Then how *pure* they must be! A man instinctively shrinks from handling anything that stains or sullies or defiles. We like to caress the thing that is clean. And God holds His people in His hand! *'Purge me with hyssop,'* they used to cry, *'that I may be clean; wash me that I may be whiter than snow!'* And the fact that He now fondles them in His fingers and holds them in His hand shows how perfectly He has answered that penitential prayer of theirs.

All His saints are in His hand! Then how *precious* they must be!

'Frank,' I said to a small boy the other day, 'I want you to run a message for me. You will need to take this money, so you must be very, very careful.'

'All right,' he said, smiling at my solicitude, 'I shan't lose it; I'll hold it *in my hand* all the way!'

I have known men and women adopt the same expedient. A purse may be committed to pocket or handbag; but when they find it necessary to carry something that is particularly precious, they hold it *in their hand* all the way.

All His saints are in His hand! Then how *useful* they may be! The world's work is done, not by the thing that the hand holds, but by the hand that holds it.

When Richard Baxter lay dying, his friends, pitying his pain, liked to comfort him by speaking of the good that he had achieved by means of his writings. Baxter shook his head. 'No,' he said, 'I was but a pen in God's hand, and what praise is due to a pen?'

When Saladin saw the sword with which Richard Cœur de Lion had fought so bravely, he marvelled that so common a blade should have wrought such mighty deeds. 'It was not the sword,' replied one of the English officers, 'it was the arm of Richard!'

When Paganini appeared for the first time at the Royal Opera House in Paris, the aristocracy of France was gathered to hear him. In his peculiar ghostly manner he glided on to the stage amidst the breathless silence of the expectant throng. Commencing to tune his violin, a string snapped. The audience tittered. Commencing again, a second string broke; and, a moment later, a third gave way. The people stared in consternation. Paganini paused for

just a second, and then, giving one of his grim smiles, he lifted his instrument, and, from the single string, drew music that seemed almost divine.

Only a pen—but a pen in the hand of a poet!

Only a common sword—but a sword in the hand of Richard!

Only a broken violin—but a violin in the hand of a master!

Only five loaves and two small fishes—but five loaves and two small fishes in the hands of the Son of God!

Only common clay like Dusty and me—but Dusty and me, and all His saints, in such hands! In the skilful hands of such a Potter, the commonest clay may be fashioned into a vessel of honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use.

VI

THE MIDDLE WICKET

'He allus aims for t' middle wicket!' I came upon the suggestive and emphatic assertion in the *Memorials and Correspondence of John Brash.* The author, Mr. I. E. Page, is discussing the secret of the evangelist's success, and he allows one of his hearers to hazard a conjecture. 'Mr. Brash,' exclaims this man bluntly, 'allus aims for t' middle wicket!'

Now this is good, distinctly good. And, beside this good thing, I lay another thing as good as itself. I came upon it in Mr. Edward Smith's *Mending Men.* Those who know the book have all fallen in love with Sam. I did; and Mr. Smith wrote to thank me for my public declaration of affection. The pity of it is that whilst his letter was on its long, long voyage from England to Australia, the hand that wrote both it and the story of Sam laid down the pen for ever. But Sam remains, and I am glad that Mr. Smith lived long enough to introduce him to us. For Sam makes a brave figure. On one important occasion he was invited to speak at a certain manufacturing town in England. A great crowd assembled, and the vicar, who presided, was delighted; but he remarked to Sam afterwards:

'How is it you are able to interest so many?'

'Well, sir, I shoots 'em!' Sam replied.

'Shoot 'em! What do you mean?'

'Well, you parsons all tries to, but you aim at the head, and misses; the shots go clean over: I always goes for *the third button* on the waistcoat!'

'Capital!' replied the vicar; 'I'll not forget the lesson, and will try henceforth *for the heart!*'

'The middle wicket!' says Mr. Brash.

'The third button!' cries Sam.

These two things side by side smite me on the face with all the force of a stinging rebuke.

It is so easy to forget that our first appeal is to the emotions. Apologetics have their place, but it is quite a secondary place. 'How limited is the force of human reason!' exclaims Lord Beaconsfield, in *Coningsby*. 'We are not indebted to the *reason* of man for any of the great achievements which are the landmarks of human progress. It was not *reason* that besieged Troy: it was not *reason* that sent forth the Saracen from the desert to conquer the world: it was not *reason* that inspired the crusader and established the monastic orders: it was not *reason* that created the French Revolution. Man is only great when he acts from the passions, never irresistible but when he appeals to the imagination.' Clearly, therefore, we preachers are too fond of arguing; too fond of proving things; too fond of rounding off our paragraphs with a triumphant Q.E.D.

And this sort of preaching brings its own rebuke. Just when we are in the midst of it, along comes an evangelist—Mr. Smith's 'Sam,' for example. His logic is enough to make poor Euclid turn in his ancient grave. But, in spite of that, he moves men to tears, stabs their consciences, and eventually wins their hearts. I say 'in spite of that,' for I do not wish it to be understood that it is as a result of his faulty argument that he achieves his triumph. I would rather have my chimney swept by a logical sweep than by an illogical sweep. But it is indisputable that an atrociously illogical chimney-sweep might remove every speck of soot from my flues, whilst a modern Euclid would leave them as filthy as ever if he relied altogether on his logic. In precisely the same way, I would very much rather hear an accurate than an inaccurate preacher. I expect my minister to give me correct pronunciation, faultless logic, and resistless argument. But, for all that, it is indisputable that these things can no more save a soul than they can sweep a chimney. And the preacher who leans upon them will have the mortifying experience of Mr. Smith's vicar. He will see another man, lacking all these most excellent qualities, come along and achieve the end for which he himself has been labouring so long.

I am sure that most of us have been too scared of emotionalism. We forget that man is a most emotional animal. It is his very emotionalism that leads

him to pretend that he is not emotional at all. I came upon a striking instance of this the other afternoon. I was on a tram in Dandenong Road. The car stopped, and a man of about five-and-thirty helped an elderly lady and a little girl to the seat opposite me. Then, very abruptly, he turned and walked away.

'Good-bye, daddy!' the little girl called after him; and she addressed the lady as Grandma. My fellow-passengers were evidently the man's mother and daughter; yet he had turned his back upon them and walked away without a word of farewell, without even a smile! I was astounded at his heartlessness!

Before the tram reached the terminus, however, I made friends with the little girl and got into conversation with her companion. I found that the child had just lost her mother: the grandmother was taking her to her own home for the time being: and this was the first parting between father and daughter. The man had turned away so abruptly, not because he was destitute of emotion, but because he did not wish others to witness the intensity of his grief.

Or change the scene. A great sporting journal recently described an English cricket team taking the field for an important match. Twenty thousand eyes are fastened upon the players, and they know it. Yet they stroll out in the most off-hand and casual manner. They look as if they have no object in life, no business on hand, and are feeling unutterably

bored. Each man adopts some device of his own for appearing indolent, indifferent, unconcerned. 'Of course,' this writer goes on to say, 'it is all a piece of make-believe. Your first-class cricketer hates to show that he has any emotions. He likes to be regarded as a mass of ice or a block of marble. Any exuberance of feeling is supposed to involve bad form.' It is just because the players feel so deeply that they are so careful to pose as though they do not feel at all. Now this is intensely characteristic, and we preachers and teachers will be the silliest of dupes if we allow men to trick us. The cold-blooded appearance of our congregations is very, very often a mere game of make-believe. The Scot is not the only man who hates to show his feeling. The third button is, after all, a wonderfully vulnerable spot; Leg theory and off theory are all very well; but there remains something to be said for bowling at the middle wicket.

We are palpitating bundles of emotion. No man will believe it about himself, but every man will believe it of every other man. The novelist has no doubt about it, for he knows that there is no date in the history of English literature more epoch-making than the date on which Samuel Richardson discovered that fiction would be amazingly more popular if suffused with sentiment. The statesman knows it, for experience has taught him that there is no appeal quite as effective as a sentimental appeal. The

barrister knows it, for he has addressed too many juries to be ignorant of their susceptibilities. We all recognize, when we come to think of it, that love, hate, pity, shame, jealousy, sympathy, revenge—the great master-passions that sway us and make us what we are—are all of them matters of sentiment, and that sentiment governs the world. The preacher is slow to discover that the shortest cut to conscience is by way of the emotions.

Why, the story of the Church is written in chapters of emotionalism and floods of tears! It was so, even in the Old Testament. 'Speak ye home *to the heart* of Jerusalem, saith the Lord.' The Hebrew words indicate, Sir George Adam Smith tells us, that a prophet is to stir the soul of the people as a lover stirs the heart of a lass when he makes his great appeal and wins her. It is ever so. From the day of Pentecost until this day the great epochs of Church history have been distinguished by waves of emotion, storms of feeling, tempests of tears. All that we know for certain about the impression made on those first three thousand Christian converts is that they were 'cut *to the heart.*' Methodism was born, and the whole history of England remodelled, when, on that never-to-be-forgotten day at Aldersgate Street, John Wesley felt 'his heart strangely warmed.' And we all know how Whitefield won his memorable triumphs on both sides of the Atlantic. It is impossible even now to read those billowy ser-

mons, in cold and passionless type, without being moved and melted. And what must their delivery have been? No wonder that strong men were bowed with weeping, and that the hardest wrung their hands in anguish. Whittier has finely immortalized it in *The Preacher:*

> So the flood of emotion deep and strong
> Troubled the land as it swept along,
> But left a result of holier lives.

Without a single exception, the stories of the great revivals in Scotland, Wales, and everywhere else,. point us along the same road. Men are strangely susceptible at this very point, and out of their very susceptibility arises the reluctance of the preacher to strike home. But let him show no mercy. Paris must aim at the heel of Achilles. The third button is the strategic point that dominates the whole situation. 'Never mind the dogmas of the schools,' exclaimed Laurence Sterne once, 'but get straight to the heart!'

I have already said that appearances conspire to deceive. Men struggle like Titans to show themselves callous, and they struggle most frantically when they feel most deeply. A young minister is shy of speaking frankly to cultured or wealthy people on the things that lie nearest his own heart. There is something fearfully forbidding in the very atmosphere of refinement. But the mistaken reserve will not last long. Experience will soon teach him

that there are aching hearts in castles as well as in cottages; and that the most finished culture capitulates on demand to the philosophy of the third button. I met with a striking and beautiful instance quite recently. It occurs in Edith Sichel's delightful biography of Alfred Ainger. Ainger was the son of a Unitarian. His mother died whilst he was still in infancy. The home was one of great comfort and of some luxury; but it possessed no religious atmosphere at all. Ainger sometimes attended Unitarian services and sometimes went to the Church of England. At length he went regularly to hear Frederick Denison Maurice. Maurice was then professor of theology at King's College, and the author of *Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy.* An onlooker would never have suspected the studious and pale-faced schoolboy, attending the lectures of the brilliant Anglican professor, of undue emotionalism. Yet, amidst such circumstances, those deep impressions were made which shaped his entire life. Maurice captivated not so much his intellect as his heart. His biographer tells us that 'the faith which was to last him his life, to comfort and restrain and uphold him, came to him as a great emotion, making all things new. And Maurice always remained its representative.' It rushed into his heart like a rising tide, pouring its surging volume into every crevice and cranny. He himself wrote of it later on. 'It is sixteen years since that balmy summer afternoon

when I heard him preach on the raising of Lazarus in the solemn, quiet chapel of Lincoln's Inn; and even as I write I see the "prophets blazoned on the panes" of the ancient windows, and look up to that living prophet face which no one who ever saw it could forget, and hear once more

> . . . The trembling fervency of prayer
> With which he led our souls the prayerful way.'

I am not unaware of the peril into which all this may lead. There is nothing in home or class or pulpit more repellent than sickly sentimentalism, maudlin pathos, the treacherous trickery of tears. But I am not afraid. I write as to sane men who know how to marshal their facts, state their arguments and plead their cause. And to such men I pass on the priceless philosophy of the *Middle Wicket* and the *Third Button*. Depend upon it, the third button is the most susceptible, the most vulnerable, and therefore the most hopeful, point at which the great assault upon Mansoul can be made. It is more sensitive than the point of the finger or the pupil of the eye. The preacher who neglects that strategic situation is like a besieging general who turns his back on the unguarded gate, and makes his attack at the very point at which the entire strength of the garrison has been massed.

VII

THE LURE OF THE LOATHSOME

We were sitting together in the study at Silverstream, John Broadbanks and I. It was my turn to spend Monday with him, and, following our invariable custom, I had arrived just before lunch.

'Come in!' he cried laughingly, as he stood with Lilian in the porch. 'Why, you must be frozen!' It was in the depth of winter, and the plain lay under several inches of snow. In his big open fireplace, however, John had some enormous logs blazing, and we were soon making the most of them.

'I'm awfully sorry,' he said, as soon as we had settled down, 'but I'm not as free to-day as I like to be when you come. I've just been called to Waihola. Old Roger Macalpine has had a stroke, and they are very nervous about him. I hope you will be able to stay till I get back.' He stepped across to the window and surveyed the cheerless prospect. 'It's bitterly cold,' he went on, 'and there may be more snow, or I would ask you to come with me for the sake of the drive.' I assured him that nothing would delight me more; and we again yielded ourselves to the luxury of our arm-chairs.

I forget now—this all took place more than twenty years ago—what led to the mention of

Dante's name. Perhaps we were discussing the sermons of the previous day. But, as plainly as though it had happened yesterday, I can see John clambering on to the study table and reaching, from the top shelf of a lofty cupboard, a handsome edition of the *Inferno*.

'What a place to keep it!' I exclaimed; and, even as I spoke, the gong sounded from the dining-room.

John broke into one of his infectious peals of laughter.

'Ah!' he cried, 'that's another story. I must tell you that as we drive along this afternoon!'

We were soon on the road. We were amused at the young rabbits lost in the snow. They could only crawl slowly through the soft and yielding drifts. John put half a dozen of the larger ones in a bag to take home to the children; we helped a few to their burrows—or to those of their furry neighbours; but the majority we had to leave to struggle home as best they could.

'You were going to tell me about the *Inferno*,' I said, when we at length settled down to our long drive across the plain.

'Oh, yes,' he replied, laughing again, 'it has to do with young Jack; that's why I couldn't tell you at lunch. It's a fine edition, with Doré's plates; it was given me by my grandmother when I left England; and we used to keep it in the sitting-room. But young Jack used to get at it and pore over the pic-

tures for an hour at a time. At last they got on his nerves. He would scream out in the night, and, when we went to him, we found that his terror arose from something he had seen in Dante. And the singular thing is that, the more they frightened him, the more they fascinated him. He would go and have a look at one of the horrible scenes and then go away by himself and shudder; but, five minutes afterwards, he would be back at it again. We decided to put the book out of his reach; that's why we keep it on the top shelf in the cupboard!'

I laughed with John at the time; but I have often caught myself thinking about it since. There is such a thing as the lure of the loathsome. Darwin tells us how he once inserted an adder in a paper bag and slipped the package through the bars into the monkey cage at the Zoo. The curiosity of the animals prompted them to cluster round the mysterious parcel; but when they opened it, and, peeping cautiously in, caught sight of the reptile they swarmed in frantic haste up the bars to the top of the cage, screaming as they went. Yet they found it impossible to remain in that secure retreat. One by one they would creep steadily down, peep once more into the bag, and again rush, shrieking, up the bars. They shuddered in abject horror at the sight of the snake, but they could not leave it alone. The lure of the loathsome was too strong for them. They returned again and again to see the thing they hated,

just as Jack Broadbanks crept repeatedly to the plates that had such a horror for him. A great deal has been written and said about snake-charmers; in actual experience it is usually the snake that does the charming.

As readers of *The Golden Milestone* know, my Tasmanian holidays were all spent at Wedge Bay; Wedge Bay is close to Port Arthur; and we often went across. Nature has done all that even Nature can do to make Port Arthur the fairest spot on the face of the earth. I have visited many wonderful countries and seen many lovely landscapes, but I know few spots more charming. Every prospect pleases and only man is vile. For Port Arthur is the old convict settlement, and man has turned paradise into Perdition. It is a place of dark cells and horrid torture chambers, a place of gloomy prisons and frowning penitentiaries. A mile or so across the beautiful sheet of clear blue water is the Isle of the Dead; and the Isle of the Dead, though no larger than a fair-sized garden, is a jumble of hundreds and hundreds of nameless and dishonoured graves. Everybody who has read *The Term of His Natural Life* or *The Broad Arrow* knows that these tottering ruins at Port Arthur represent a dark and melancholy history. The flesh creeps as we move about these crumbling structures, each haunted by grim and terrible traditions. If stones had voices, what blood-curdling tales these walls could tell! And yet

how we love to visit them! People travel hundreds of miles to see the dungeons of Port Arthur. I remember seeing a gentle young girl of eighteen or nineteen wiping away her tears as she followed the guide from place to place. She knew how sad it all was; yet she came a long, long way to see it!

Let nobody talk about a depraved taste! We are not discussing a depraved taste; we are discussing human nature. Little Jack Broadbanks had no depraved taste; the girl at Port Arthur had no depraved taste; and who would attribute a depraved taste to Charles Dickens? Yet Dickens felt the lure of the loathsome, the magnetism of the repellent. In his latter days, when he was giving public readings from his own works, he felt the necessity of adding, from time to time, to his repertory. On one such occasion, he resolved upon a selection from *Oliver Twist*. He chose the passage describing the murder of Nancy. Forster, his friend and biographer, begged him to abandon the idea. The physical and nervous strain of such a recital would, he felt, be terrific. But Dickens was determined. The fascination of the murder scene had taken complete possession of him. He could, he said, petrify any audience by carrying into execution the plan that he had formed of rendering the passage. He at length gave an experimental reading before a select company of critics and literary men. 'The murder scene,' we are told, 'achieved amazing results and showed a per-

fect mastery of the horrible.' But, as Forster had feared, it exacted terrible toll upon the author's energy, and his health broke down under the strain. What is this but the *Inferno* episode on a somewhat larger scale?

The emotion that lured Jack Broadbanks to the pictures that he loathed dominates life at every point. Is it not very significant that, at the Tower of London, you must pay an additional fee to inspect the Bloody Tower; whilst, at Madame Tussaud's, the same is true of the Chamber of Horrors? The strange principle invades even the realm of religion. It leads to the deification of ugliness. Few of the ancient temples of the Orient made any serious attempt to attract men to their altars by the beauty of their deities. They rather went to the other extreme, and relied upon casting a potent spell over the minds of their devotees by the frightful forms which their divinities assumed. The innumerable idols of India are remarkable for nothing so much as for their uniform unsightliness. In his *Opening Up of Africa* Sir H. H. Johnston, G.C.M.G., K.C.B., shows how the same peculiarity dominated the earliest civilization of Egypt. The Egyptians, he points out, abandoned their attempts to domesticate the ibex, the antelope, and the gazelle; they took no interest in the buffalo or the eland; they soon abandoned their efforts to make the lovely and delicately tinted crane an inmate of their enclosures and re-

serves. Surrounded by animals of singular gracefulness, and by birds of the most dazzling plumage, they were blind to the beauty of such creatures. 'In short,' says Sir Harry, 'with all the wealth of the African fauna to draw upon, the Egyptians made the hippopotamus—one of nature's buffooneries—a goddess, and the crocodile a god!' The snake and the ape have been exalted to positions of eminence in the pantheons of primitive peoples much more often than the gentler and lovelier denizens of the forest and the jungle. Nor has the Church herself been quite innocent. Lecky points out that, from the sixth to the twelfth centuries, the ascetic idea of ugliness became supreme in Christian art. 'Many of the Roman mosaics during that period,' he says, 'exhibit a hideousness which the inexpertness of the artists was quite insufficient to account for, and which was evidently imitated from the emaciation of extreme asceticism.' The priests, whose sharp eyes seem to have missed nothing really worth observing, evidently saw that the horrible can cast its potent spell as well as the beautiful; and they used the lure of the loathsome for all it was worth.

Or glance round a library! What would our literature be without its villains? In one of his most striking parables, Robert Louis Stevenson makes a hateful book turn upon its reader with the question, 'If you do not like me, why read me?' But it is not a matter of fondness; it is a matter of fascination.

Jack Broadbanks was not fond of the *Inferno;* yet, like the monkeys with the snake, he could not leave it alone. All our great English masters have recognized the subtle but potent force of the appeal made to the imagination by the really revolting. Yet comparatively few writers have discovered the art of controlling that force and of directing it. As in Nature, the proportion must be kept true and the balance just. The Shakespearean age provides us with a remarkable illustration. Shakespeare has his villains and his rogues, and he portrays their rascality with a blunt and hearty coarseness. When Shakespeare had passed away, however, there arose an extraordinary crowd of inferior dramatists who thought to ape the master and share his triumph. They remind us of the jackals that follow in the track of a lion. These smaller souls examined the great plays and convinced themselves that the secret lay in the vivid and realistic delineation of roguery and vice. And, acting on that hypothesis, they presented the world with a literature that, for brutality and obscenity, has never been surpassed. 'We have Belial here,' as Macaulay pithily puts it, 'not as when he inspired Ovid and Ariosto, but with the iron eye and cruel sneer of Mephistopheles.' The repulsive has its place in literature as in life. It is a powerful and effective place; but it is distinctly a limited one. *David Copperfield* would be the poorer without Uriah Heep; *Oliver Twist* would sink to mediocrity with-

out Fagin; and how could we spare Quilp from *The Old Curiosity Shop?* But literature cannot be built up on Heeps, Fagins, and Quilps, any more than nature can weave her wondrous web out of the ugly things alone.

I was taking a turn up and down the lawn the other afternoon when the postman handed me a letter from Ralph Heritage. Ralph is minister at Wanganui; it is some years since I last heard from him. 'I have just celebrated,' he says, 'the twenty-fifth anniversary of my ordination; and at such a time a fellow looks back across the years and takes stock of things. I have been thinking particularly of the time when you were at Mosgiel and I at Invercargill. I can see now that I made grave mistakes in those days. I was too fond of dealing with nasty things. I was never happy unless I was exposing something or showing up somebody. If I could have my first ministry over again, I would strike a different note.' There is something in what Ralph says. In the ministry of the church, the loathsome has its place, but it is essentially a limited place. It is right that men who are the apostles of righteousness should expose evil and that the ambassadors of truth should pierce all forms of error with Ithuriel's spear. The great social cancers of our time need fearless challenge and brave attack. But it must be very wisely and very tenderly done. A fierce campaign of angry denunciation will never

carry us to our goal. The Church cannot live upon negations, condemnations and attacks; nor can the world be saved by such expedients. The truth is itself the most terrific exposure of error. The best way of emphasizing the defilement of an unclean garment is quietly to lay a snowy one beside it. The most convincing way of showing the deformities of a crooked stick is simply to lay a straight one by its side. The Church sets her witness to a minor key whenever she sounds a negative note. The positive always strikes the hardest and probes the deepest. Nothing makes a man feel more ashamed of himself than the story of Jesus. Paul made the grand tour of Asia and Europe, and, after surveying the evils that were filling that old pagan world with loathing and disgust, he made up his mind that there was only one thing for it. *'I determined,'* he says, *'not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.'* There may be special occasions on which the uglier aspects of life must be exposed to the searchlight of public criticism and the scalpel of pitiless analysis; but, year in and year out, it is by means of the tremendous affirmations of the everlasting gospel that the enduring work is done.

VIII

THE CONGRESS OF THE UNIVERSE

I WAS—or thought I was—at the Congress of the Universe. It was held on a small star away on the confines of immensity; a star that is scarcely visible through our most powerful telescopes, and that is never mentioned in any of our Hand-books of Astronomy. How I reached the scene of this extraordinary conclave I do not know; nor did it occur to me to inquire as to the ways and means by which the other delegates made their way thither. But there they were! There were gigantic Martians, quaint little Moon-men, pompous representatives of planets whose names are household words with us, and strange-looking figures from worlds whose names I had never before heard.

The vegetation of that weird sphere on which the Congress met was so tall and yet so dense that the assembly—which consisted of some thousands of delegates—met in the open air beneath a vast dome of over-arching forestry. It was a natural arbour of prodigious proportions. I can give no account of the proceedings. I scarcely understood a word. The debates were conducted in languages to which I had never before listened; and, although interpreters were employed, none of them translated the

speeches into any tongue with which I was familiar. Earth and its trivial affairs seemed extremely insignificant from that remote standpoint.

And yet I was conscious of the fact that the globe that I had the honour to represent was receiving a good deal of attention from the assembled delegates. Every now and again, when some particularly pointed reference was made to it, everybody turned and stared at me. I thought they looked disdainfully—almost angrily—and I felt embarrassed and uncomfortable. I wished that I could leave the Congress and return to earth; but I knew not how to arrange for my passage.

One evening, however, I grasped the situation. The sessions of the Congress were over for the day, and I was taking a solitary stroll. I had no difficulty in securing solitude, for nobody appeared to desire my company. Indeed, I thought that most of them seemed anxious to avoid me. But on this particular evening I came upon two of them sitting on a quiet hillside talking a language that I could with some difficulty comprehend. One of them was pointing away into space; and, following the direction of his finger, I gathered that he was pointing to my native sphere. I had learned to distinguish the Earth from all the other distant orbs; and I felt wretchedly home-sick whenever I glanced that way.

'You are pointing to the world from which I come?' I said, taking a seat beside them.

'We are,' replied the delegate whose finger had been upraised; 'it is the one world that none of us can understand.'

'And am I right,' I asked, 'in thinking that the Congress has been largely concerned with its affairs?'

'Quite right,' he replied, a little haughtily; 'your world is an inscrutable mystery to all of us.'

'In what respect?' I anxiously inquired.

'It is said,' he condescendingly explained, 'that yours is the one world in all creation upon which the Son of the Great God set His feet; is that so?'

'It is even so,' I replied; and somehow that familiar fact seemed more amazing at this terrific distance from home than it had ever before appeared.

'It is even said among us,' continued my strange companion, 'that He laid down His life, and endured the bitterest shame, for the salvation of the men on your small planet.'

'And is it *that* that bewilders you?' I asked, fancying that I had grasped their difficulty at last; 'I am afraid that I cannot explain it to you; it is too wonderful for words.'

'No, no,' he replied, interrupting me. 'It is not *that* which seems so astonishing to us. But it is said among us that, although the Son of the Great God died for the men of your planet nearly two thousand years ago, very few of them, even yet, know anything about it. Is that really so?'

Once more I felt extremely uncomfortable. What could I say?

'Oh,' I murmured hesitatingly, 'a good many of them know about it!'

'A good many!' he repeated scornfully, 'a good many! After two thousand years! And those who know are too selfish and too sluggish to tell the others! Why, if it had happened on any other planet——'

'Excuse me,' interposed our companion, who up to this time had listened in silence, 'but would it not be better to allow this Earth-delegate to explain the position to the Congress to-morrow? Now that we have discovered a common basis of speech, we can interpret for him, you know.'

I could not reject a proposal that was both reasonable and considerate; and yet I felt that I was confronted by the most appalling difficulty that I had ever known. I maintained a bewildered silence; and my companions evidently construed my silence as consent. They rose and left me sitting on that lonely hillside, wondering whatever I could say.

How could I elucidate, to the satisfaction of the Congress, the situation that seemed so baffling and inexplicable to these representatives of other globes? As I sat there, my face buried in my hands, darkness settled about me and it grew icily cold. But it was some time before I noticed the change, for I was battling my way through a surge of stormy thought.

Yet, the more I thought, the more impossible my task appeared. The beads of perspiration stood upon my brow; I shuddered in anticipation of the morrow's ordeal.

And, with that shudder, I awoke to find myself in the arm-chair into which I had thrown myself, very tired, on my return from a prolonged meeting of the Missionary Committee. I was glad that it was all a dream; but the problem presented by the dream still haunts my tortured fancy.

IX

A BOOK OF BLOTS

I DABBLE in photography. The other evening I was showing my album to a friend who proposes to learn the black art. After he had admired my pet prints, he reduced me to abject humiliation.

'You have taken other photographs besides these?' he asked.

I confessed that he had correctly stated the case.

'Then would you mind,' he went on, 'would you mind showing me your *failures*—your spoiled negatives and your poorer prints? I fancy,' he explained, 'I fancy I could learn more from *them* than from *these*.'

It was rather a come-down, but I have forgiven him now; for I have discovered that whilst he has abased my pride he has enriched my philosophy.

I have come to see, as a result of that uncomfortable experience by the fireside, that failures are really very fine things. Is it not by means of our breakdowns that we discover our hidden weaknesses? and is it not by removing the lurking frailties thus revealed that we ultimately reach our goal? The amateur photographer learns very little from his successful prints. But whenever, instead of a clear image, he is confronted by a hazy blur, he patiently

investigates the matter, discovers the reason of the defect, and thus attains one further degree of proficiency in photographic art. When motor-cars were first introduced, every main road was dotted with cars that had vexatiously come to grief. But each such humiliation constituted itself a revelation, either to the owner, or to the maker, or to both. One by one, the causes of misfortune were removed, with the result that to-day such discomforts are comparatively rare. When the first airships fell, we did not abandon the conquest of the air as a hopeless chimera. We carefully investigated the cause of the collapse, and were grateful for the instruction that led us one step nearer to our ultimate goal. James Watt declared that the thing most wanted in mechanical engineering was a history of failures. 'We want,' he said, *'a book of blots!'* John Hunter, the eminent Scottish surgeon, used to say that medical science would never make much headway until professional men had the courage to publish their failures as well as their successes. Did not Wenzel spoil 'a hatful of eyes' in learning how to operate for cataract? Then, at last, he mastered the secret, and taught surgical science how to do it. Like me, he produced his perfect negative. But if only he had brought out his spoiled negatives as well! If only he had recorded the melancholy histories represented by that 'hatful of eyes!' If only he had told of his failures and shown the world how *not* to do it!

What a multitude of fruitless experiments, and what 'hatfuls of eyes' he might have saved! But no, we keep our spoiled negatives in the dark. It is a sad mistake.

I am coming to think, in view of all this, that a failure is a pretty difficult thing to define. Without those crude attempts of mine, I could never have produced a photograph that was really worth while. Was I then failing whilst I was learning? Moreover, the fact that my ruined negatives helped my friend by the fireside to turn out some capital portraits leads me to take a cheerier view of them. They were not, after all, such dismal disasters as I had supposed. That is worth thinking about. There are entries in James Watt's *Book of Blots* that are themselves crepuscular intimations of a coming glory. There are splendid failures that immeasurably outshine many of our paltry successes. The pathfinder does not really fail, even though his bones lie on the track. Has he not blazed a trail along which others may press to the hidden goal? Did Moses fail because he never entered the Promised Land? Did David fail because he never built God's house? Did Columbus fail because he never found India through the gates of the golden west? Did Livingstone fail because, dying in the trackless jungle, he never saw the fountains of Herodotus? To ask these questions is to answer them. Moses made it possible for Joshua to enter Canaan! David

made it possible for Solomon to build the temple! The failure of Columbus to find India gave us a new hemisphere! Livingstone opened a continent to the commerce and traffic of the world! These men may have fancied that they had failed. But—like me with my negatives—they did not recognize their own success even when it stared them in the face. There is surely success in the failure that makes success possible to another. Life holds fewer failures than we often think. I read the other day of an artist who, on taking a final look at his favourite picture before sending it to the Academy, discovered to his dismay several blots on the blue sky. To erase them was impossible. So, quickly, he seized his brush, and turned each blot into a bird. I fancy that we shall find at last that many of our blots have been transformed by the Great Artist after a similar fashion. 'The Bible is a strange book,' says Dr. Matheson. 'It puts a blot upon all its portraits; and it does so, not by mistake, but by design. Its blots are as much a bit of the art as are its beauties.' Let us have *a book of blots,* then, by all means! In some modest corner there may be a reference to my spoiled negatives. And, in blazing splendour, you will find the story of the Crucifixion there.

The trouble about the whole matter is just this. People will insist in supposing that failure and success are to be computed by comparing a man's ambition with his achievement. They entirely forget

that failure is relative rather than absolute. It is the easiest thing in the world to compute failure and success if we are content with the cheap and easy process of comparing a man's aims with his attainments, taking the gap that yawns between the two as representing the measure of his failure. But is such a process just? Does it not set a premium on low aspiration? Is it fair to say that, because a man has realized his aspiration, he is therefore a success? or that, because a man has fallen short of his self-set goal, he is therefore a failure? Such a flippant method of estimating the issues of life entirely overlooks the fact that a man who proposes to himself an ignoble ambition has already failed, whether he eventually reaches his goal or not. Browning taught us as much long ago:

> That low man seeks a little thing to do,
> Sees it—and does it.
> That high man, with a great thing to pursue,
> Dies ere he knows it.

Clearly, therefore, the degree of success cannot be computed by this simple process. Max Müller used to think what a fine thing it would be to be enrolled as a member of the French Academy. His youthful aspiration was afterwards realized. And, in recording it, he employs the most pathetic words that even he ever penned. *'The dream of the reality,'* he says, *'was better than the reality of the dream.'* 'In the course of three weeks,' writes Greville in his

Memoirs, 'I have attained the three things which I have most desired in the world for years past, and on the whole I do not feel that my happiness is at all increased.' The dream of the reality was better than the reality of the dream. There is a success which is but the gaudy badge of a vulgar failure; it overtakes with all the characteristics of a retributive justice the man who sets before himself some mean or unworthy ambition.

I am coming to believe—I hope I shall not have to stand my trial for heresy—that no man really fails who holds success in his intention. I know that it has passed into a proverb that the way to hell is paved with good intentions. The very fact that it has passed into a proverb proves how false it is. A popular proverb is a truth turned upside down for epigrammatic effect. The way to hell paved with good intentions! How absurd! Why, there cannot be one single good intention on all that dismal road. And I am hopelessly astray if heaven does not turn out after all to be the home of all good intenders. Unless I am most grievously mistaken, our intentions are the only things that really matter. Let us follow the subject a little more closely.

First of all, what is a good intention? I have two friends, Brown and Jones. Whenever Brown declares overnight that he intends to rise with the lark, Jones sniggers. Jones evidently imagines that a man may intend to get up at daydawn and, after all,

come down late for breakfast. But this sniggering Jones is mistaken, as cynics usually are. Since the world began no man ever intended to get up early and failed to do so; and most assuredly no woman ever did. It is true, of course, that a man will often come down late for breakfast, and explain, more or less elaborately, that he intended to have been up with the lark. But the real fault is not in his punctuality, but in his veracity. He is not telling the truth. He did not intend to be up with the lark. He simply permitted a certain vapid sentimentality to flit through his mind on retiring concerning an early start next morning. But that is not an intention, as I shall presently show. It reminds me of a conversation between two little girls.

'Nelly,' said Kate, 'if I become an heiress some day, and come into a million pounds, I intend to give you half!'

'Do you, Kate?' asked Nelly; 'do you really mean it?'

'I do, indeed!' replied Kate earnestly.

'Then, Kate,' answered the pitiless Nelly, 'give me half of the *sixpence you've got in your pocket!*'

And the failure to share the sixpence threw the gravest suspicion on the reality of the intention concerning the division of the possible inheritance.

For the very word *'intention'* is a sister to the word *'intense.'* My dictionary tells me that an intention is 'the state of being strained or intensified; a

determination to act in a particular manner.' Now, there was nothing strained or intense about Kate's proposal to share her millions with Nelly; there was nothing strained or intense about the idea of rising with the lark on that particular morning; there was nothing strained or intense about those impious and fraudulent sentimentalities that are popularly supposed to garnish the road to perdition. None of these things are, therefore, intentions at all. An intention is a virile thing, having vim and vigour in it. If a man intends to rise early—that is, if he purposes *with strain and intensity* to rise early, setting his teeth and clenching his fist in his dogged determination—his trouble will be, not to wake early, but to go to sleep at all. A bridegroom who has to catch an early train in order to fulfil his engagement with his bride at the altar will be up to the tick, because he really intended to. The man who promised his wife that he would rise at dawn and dig potatoes will come down late for breakfast—for obvious reasons. The bridegroom intended. The other man didn't. You can't make bread without flour. You can't make an intention without intensity. We fail of our intentions much less often than we think. The trouble is that very few of us ever entertain any intentions at all. We do not intend, simply because we are not ourselves intense.

Why, the very law of the land—the policeman, the magistrate, and the judge—will deal with me,

not according to my deeds, but according to the intentions behind the deeds. I may shoot a man dead; but, if there was no malice in my intent, no jury will find me guilty of murder. Or I may set myself *with strain and intensity* to slay a man, put the gun to my shoulder and miss! And, although I have hurt no hair of his head, the law will make a felon of me. Intentions are everything. Everybody who has read Booker Washington's *Up from Slavery* has fallen in love with the young slave's mother. She was a lovely character, every way. But in the description of her we come across the following curious paragraph: 'One of my earliest recollections is that of my mother cooking a chicken late at night, and awakening her children for the purpose of feeding them. How or where she got it I don't know. I presume, however, it was procured from our owner's farm. Some people may call this theft. If such a thing were to happen now, I should condemn it as a theft myself. But taking place at the time it did, and for the reason that it did, no one could ever make me believe my mother was guilty of thieving. She was simply a victim of the system of slavery.' She was not a thief, that is to say, because she did not intend to be a thief. It is the intention that counts.

It comes, then, to this: if a man has a good intention, he is a good man. That seems indisputable. We shall stand or fall at last, every one of us, by our

intentions. That is why I affirmed at the outset that our intentions are the only things that matter. We are what we intend. In his *Saul,* Browning tells us truly that "Tis not what man does which exalts him, but what man would do.' And Wordsworth sings of God as:

> A Judge who, as man claims by merit, gives;
> To whose all-pondering mind a noble aim,
> Faithfully kept, is as a noble deed;
> In whose pure sight all virtue doth succeed.

During those gloomy October days of 1915, Nurse Edith Cavell, whose statue, near Trafalgar Square, is one of London's most honoured adornments, sat in her lonely prison at Brussels awaiting execution. She had one companion—her precious little copy of *The Imitation of Christ.* In her last moments she asked that it should be sent, after the execution, to her cousin, Mr. E. D. Cavell. That gentleman received it three years later. And, opening it, his eye was arrested by one sentence which was marked and underlined. It had comforted the lonely prisoner as, with unwavering courage, she had faced her dreadful death. It was this: *Man considereth the deeds, but God weigheth the intentions.* On my own shelves the *Imitation* stands next to William Law's *Serious Call.* Those who have sat at the feet of William Law are never likely to forget the titles which he gives to the various chapters of his masterpiece. They will recall the *second* chapter, which he

describes as *'an inquiry into the reason why the generality of Christians fall so far short of the Holiness and Devotion of Christianity';* and they will recall the *third* chapter which, answering the question raised in the *second,* deals with *'the great danger and folly of not intending to be as eminent and exemplary as we can in the practice of all Christian Virtues.'*

The great danger and folly of not intending! Be sure, then, that there is no good intention in the road that leads to perdition! Those who intend to get up early, get up early; those who intend to get to heaven, get there. There seem at times to be so few on the way because so few intend to go. Like little Kate in my story, they trick themselves with nebulous sentimentalities. But the intenders all go. That was what Jesus meant when He said: *'The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.'* The man whose purpose has strain and intensity about it—to revert once more to the dictionary—could not be kept out of heaven, or anywhere else.

PART III

I

THE GIANT-KILLER

I RAISE my feeble voice to-day in solemn protest against the inordinate popularity of Jack the Giant-Killer. If this bloodthirsty young scapegrace had perpetrated his murderous atrocities upon men of his own size, he would have been classed with Jack the Ripper, would have figured in the Newgate Calendar, and would have been the execration of decent people everywhere. Indeed, it is very possible that the wrath of the multitude might have been too much for the authorities; the populace might have taken the law into their own hands and torn the villain limb from limb. But, simply because he marks out for himself victims a few sizes larger, we all cheer him to the echo, inscribe his name upon the scroll of fame, number him among the heroes and immortals, and recite the gruesome record of his assassinations for the delectation and emulation of young children! Instead of lynching, we lionize him. It is all, you will observe, a matter of size. The giant has no friends. Everybody laughs when he is killed. I have always felt sorry that even Bunyan succumbed to this insensate passion. There are quite a number of giants in the *Pilgrim's Progress*. For a while Bunyan treated them with admirable

toleration, almost with respect. In the *first* part of his immortal allegory—the pilgrimage of Christian—Bunyan holds his giant-slaying propensities in the severest check. But in the *second* part—the pilgrimage of Christiana—those savage proclivities get the better of him. He flings off all restraint, lets himself go, and, as a consequence, here upon the pilgrim's path lie the mangled carcases of Giant Grim, Giant Maul, Giant Despair, and all the rest of them. One by one, they all fall to the redoubtable sword of Mr. Greatheart. Mr. Greatheart becomes, in this respect, a gilt-edged edition of Jack the Giant-Killer. I cannot help feeling that it is rather a pity; and it is a pity because it is so contagious. I once arranged some special meetings for young people, and invited the Revs. Joseph Steadman, Arthur Wyndham, and Charles Lyttelton to give the addresses. But it resolved itself into a perfect orgy of giant-killing. Whether they had conferred with each other I do not know. I only know that each read the story of David and Goliath. Mr. Steadman spoke on 'The Giants that are Left for Us to Kill'; Mr. Wyndham dealt with 'The Kind of Boy who can Slay the Giants of To-day'; and Mr. Lyttelton favoured us with an ingenious treatment of 'The Five Smooth Stones with which Modern Giants can be Killed.' By the time that we got to the end of the third meeting I felt as if I was picking my way among the ghastly remains of heaps of slaughtered giants.

Jack the Giant-Killer seems to have hypnotized everybody; it is an extraordinary phenomenon.

This insatiable blood-lust of humanity in relation to giants is a mystery to me. I stand bewildered: I simply cannot understand it. I once heard Dean Worsley read the sixth of Genesis. *'There were giants in the earth in those days.'* He laid all the stress on the last three words, and there was a ring of positive exultation in his voice. He was evidently glad that the giants had been exterminated. I could have boxed his ears. Fancy betraying pleasure, in the pulpit of all places, that the giant has gone the way of the dodo and the moa! Why, it would add a new zest to life if, when you turn a corner, you stood a chance of confronting a pedestrian who had to bend his back to prevent his head from getting entangled in the telegraph wires!

I find, on glancing over what I have written, that I have given an undue prominence to preachers. It was quite unintentional. Preachers are not the only men on the face of the earth who have fallen under the spell of Jack the Giant-Killer. The poets are just as bad. Here is Browning, for example, praying,

> . . . Make no more Giants, God,
> But elevate the race!

Really, I am amazed at Browning! He out-Herods Herod! Jack the Giant-Killer is bad enough, in all conscience; but Browning is ten thousand times worse. Jack the Giant-Killer destroys all the giants

there are; but Browning actually goes to his knees and prays that no more giants may be born to us! That *is* the climax of Jack-the-Giant-Killerism!

I believe in Giants! I have never yet reduced the confidences of my soul to the compass of a creed; but, if I do, that clear affirmation will certainly stand as one of the articles of it. *I believe in giants!* I know that it is the correct thing to join the cult of Jack the Giant-Killer and cry 'Down with the Giants!' But I have kept my eyes open. And I notice that, at heart, the most redoubtable giant-killers are the most obsequious giant-worshippers. They set a knave to catch a knave, call a giant to kill a giant! The mob always pretends to hate a giant; but it always takes good care to get a giant to lead it in its giant-killing expeditions! With scarcely an exception, whenever the multitude embarks upon a giant-slaying campaign, it requisitions the services of a few giants in its own cause. And the giants that the crowd creates are invariably several sizes larger than the giant that it kills. England once went giant-hunting; so did France. England thought that the Stuart kings had grown too big for their boots. 'Down with the giants!' cried the populace in London. France thought the same about the Capets. 'Down with the giants!' cried the populace in Paris. England set out to kill the giant; and soon ran him to earth. Poor Charles the First perished on the scaffold—another victim for Jack

the Giant-Killer! Later on, in France, Poor Louis the Sixteenth went to the guillotine—another victim for Jack the Giant-Killer! But in killing its poor little giant—Charles the First—England created giants of a much more massive bulk—Hampton, Pym, and Cromwell, *especially Cromwell!* And in killing its poor little giant—Louis the Sixteenth—France created giants of a much more ponderous stature—Mirabeau, Danton, Robespierre, and Napoleon, *especially Napoleon!* That is the only defense that I can see for Jack the Giant-Killer. Every time that he, with his magic sword, hacks off the head of one giant, he unconsciously creates, by the magic of that self-same sword, a bigger giant and a better one than the giant that he destroys.

I met a man once—I hope the story is not too great a strain on the credulity of my readers—I met a man once who actually believed in committees! If he had told me that he believed in ghouls, fairies, or hobgoblins, I could have understood it. But this man believed in committees. There it stands in his creed: *I believe in Committees!* I contrast it with my own confession: *I believe in Giants!* And I see no reason to be ashamed of the comparison. If I have to choose between a committee and a giant, I feel as if I were choosing between a farthing and a fortune. Nor am I alone. I find that Mr. Spurgeon and Mr. Chamberlain are with me. 'The ideal committee,' said Mr. Spurgeon, 'is a committee of

three, two of whom never attend.' 'On every committee of eleven persons,' said Mr. Chamberlain, 'there are ten who come to the meetings without having given a thought to the subject that has brought them together: the eleventh man comes with his mind made up, and he leads all the rest; *I take care to be that man!*'

Under these conditions—and under these conditions only—a committee can render useful service. For, under these conditions, the Committee is simply the Giant on the Committee. Under any other conditions, a committee is an absurdity. A committee is necessarily a compromise. If you are going to fight your Trafalgar, it is better to trust one Nelson than a committee of admirals: if you are going to fight your Waterloo, it is better to trust one Wellington than a committee of generals. *I believe in giants!* I know that as soon as I say it someone will hurl a proverb at me. 'Two heads are better than one,' he will say, or 'There is safety in numbers.' But two can play at that game. Throwing proverbs is like snow-balling. I could easily reply with a proverb about too many cooks. You can prove anything by proverbs.

If, therefore, Robert Browning and I ever find ourselves at the same prayer-meeting, and if he gets up and begins his old prayer:

> . . . Make no more Giants, God,
> But elevate the race!

I shall reach for my hat and walk out! So will Mr. Spurgeon; so will Mr. Chamberlain; so will Thomas Carlyle! Carlyle was a tremendous believer in giants. Read his *Cromwell,* or his *Heroes,* or his *French Revolution;* and you can feel the writer's unbounded admiration for the Herculean forms that strut up and down his pages. When my soul revolts against the cult of Jack the Giant-Killer, I invariably reach down Carlyle and spend a glorious hour among the giants.

If Robert Browning, by praying for the extermination of the giants, compels Mr. Spurgeon, Mr. Chamberlain, Mr. Carlyle, and others of us, to withdraw from the prayer meeting, we shall retire to another room and pray for the multiplication of giants. How can we consistently recite our creed and say: *'I believe in giants!'* unless we are prepared to pray for more and still more of them?

By giants I mean giants, not merely big men. There is, of course, greatness *and* greatness. There is the greatness that simply represents the best we have, the greatness that seems great in comparison with absolute mediocrity; and there is the greatness that towers above everything, the greatness that dwarfs and dominates all about it. It is like Goldsmith's tall cliff

> . . . that lifts its awful form,
> Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,
> Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
> Eternal sunshine settles on its head.

There are times when I can be satisfied with greatness of the former type; but there are other times when I sigh for a man who, as Cassius said of Cæsar,

> . . . doth bestride the narrow world
> Like a colossus, and we petty men
> Walk under his huge legs, and peep about
> To find ourselves dishonourable graves.

But even amongst such monstrous men, there are giants *and* giants. We must probe a little deeper. Wherein does real greatness consist? Dr. Busby is said to have kept on his hat in the presence of King Charles that the boys might see what a great man he was! It is easy to pose as a giant to win cheap cheers. Mr. Frederic Harrison avers that, in English history, we have only known four really great men: William the Conqueror, Edward the First, Oliver Cromwell, and the elder Pitt. But Mr. Harrison is too conservative. In order to avoid the mistake made by Dr. Busby, which would make giants as common as blackberries, and the mistake made by Mr. Harrison, which would make the giant as rare as a white crow, we must make up our minds as to what we mean by greatness. Hazlitt, in one of his delightful essays, contrasts greatness with cleverness, and then ventures a definition. He describes an Indian juggler tossing and catching two balls, then three, and at last four. 'None of us,' says Hazlitt, 'could do it to save our lives. To catch

the balls in succession in less than a second of time; to throw them behind his back and twine them round his neck; to do what appears an impossibility and to do it with all the ease, the grace, the carelessness imaginable—there is something in all this which he who does not admire may be quite sure he never really admired anything.' It is wonderfully clever, and yet, the essayist argues, it is not great. And why? Because, he points out, *it achieves nothing.* The man who juggles, either with golden balls or silvery phrases, compasses no great end. And Hazlitt lays it down as an axiom that no act terminating in itself constitutes greatness; *greatness is the application of great powers to great purposes.*

But Hazlitt's definition does not lead us to finality. For, in his *Life of Beaconsfield,* Mr. Froude raises another point. Is it not possible—in accordance with Hazlitt's definition—to apply great powers to great purposes, and yet to fall short of greatness? Mr. Froude thinks it is. In the closing passages of his great biography, he sorrowfully admits that, in the truest sense, Beaconsfield was not great. He always had some personal or party end in view. And true greatness, Froude maintains, consists in the consecration of great powers, *from pure motives,* to great purposes.

But when you come to men of this stature, you are among the giants for whom the magic sword of Jack the Giant-Killer has no terrors. It can scratch,

it cannot slay them. And in that secessionist prayer-meeting which I have just described, Mr. Spurgeon and Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Carlyle, and we smaller fry, intend to pray for the multiplication of just such giants. And I shall feel, whenever I enter my pulpit, that, by preaching a gospel that glorifies unselfishness and exalts self-sacrifice, I am doing something towards hastening the answer to those prayers.

II

A PHILOSOPHY OF WINDOW-PANES

Richard Jefferies said that you can always judge a woman by her windows. The windows are the test. Richard Jefferies ought to know. He was the keenest and shrewdest of all our naturalists. He was an open-air detective. In his own department he rivalled Sherlock Holmes. He would pluck a blade of grass from under the hedge, and tell you how recently a rabbit had passed that way, and in which direction it had gone; he would finger a twig of a beech-tree and tell you all about the nightingale that sung in those branches last night, and all about the owl that frightened the songster away. He would snatch a handful of bracken from the bank, and tell you of the partridges that hid beneath it yesterday and that had passed on into the copse. Such eyes had he! He was an expert in the art of deducing spacious conclusions from very slender premises. In a matter of this kind he is therefore entitled to be heard with profound respect. He is describing the gamekeeper's cottage.

'The interior,' he says, 'is exquisitely clean; it has that bright pleasant appearance which is only possible when the housewife feels a pride in her duties, and goes about them with a cheerful heart. Not a

speck of dust can be seen upon the furniture; the *window-panes* are clean and transparent—a certain sign of loving care expended on the place, as, on the other hand, dirty windows are an indication of neglect; so much so that *the character of the cottager may almost be guessed from a glance at her glass.'* Richard Jefferies at least convinces me that there is room among our innumerable philosophies for *a philosophy of window-panes.*

The problem of the philosopher is to find a good starting-point. You must get your feet on firm ground before you can leap skywards. A clever diver likes a good spring-board. Before you can begin to wind the skein you must find one of the ends. Now, in venturing upon a philosophy of window-panes, I think I have found the psychological starting-place in a saying of Peter the Great. Peter the Great, as every schoolboy knows, made Russia. But it was an inland Russia, a Russia that had no outlet upon the great waterways of the world. Peter made his toy ships and sailed them on his ornamental lakes. He built his navies and launched them upon his inland seas. But this was poor fun. He dreamed of the great oceans and maritime highways, and became restless and ill at ease. None of his victories on land satisfied him, because none of them gave him that outlet for his ships. As soon as the flush of triumph had passed, says Waliszewski, he 'always came back to the traditional aim of his fore-

fathers—access to the sea, a Baltic port, a window open upon Europe.' That was Peter's own phrase, and it was a good one: *'a window open upon Europe.'*

Now, when you come to think of it, a navigable port is very like an open window; or, to put it the other way, a window is very like a port. A harbour is the medium of imports and exports. By means of it the ships come sailing in, and the ships go sailing out. That is precisely what windows are for. They let in the light and they let out the sight. Without *light* man cannot live; and where there is no *vision* the people perish. These represent two of the indispensabilities of life. Light is life's essential import; vision is life's essential export. Light is an immigrant; vision is an emigrant; but without a window you can have neither.

John Bunyan would have been pleased if he could have foreseen that we should to-day be engaged upon a philosophy of window-panes. For John Bunyan knew the value of windows. He spent a considerable portion of his life in Bedford Jail, and nobody could mistake Bedford Jail for the Crystal Palace. Bunyan knew what it meant to live without windows. And when, in the spacious realms of his fancy, he built his own Palace Beautiful, he made up for the lack of windows in Bedford Jail. The sisters of the palace took the worn pilgrim, and 'laid him in a large upper chamber, whose window opened

toward the sunrising; the name of the chamber was Peace; where he slept till break of day, and then awoke and sang,' The window opened toward the sun-rising; the guest of the Palace Beautiful was to catch the first ray of light that stole over the eastern hills. The Palace Beautiful was Bunyan's dream of what the Church should be. And those who enjoy the hospitality of the palace will recognize the window at once. You cannot live without light; and the sisters who dispense the hospitality of the palace will see to it that the pilgrims get plenty of sunshine. If those pilgrims deliberately draw the blinds or put up the shutters, that, of course, is their affair.

'Oh for a window open upon Europe!' sighed Peter the Great in his continental isolation. It would be grand to see the ships of Western Empires come sailing into port! And sailing out! Yes, sailing out. For exports are at least as important as imports. Emigration is at least as vital as immigration. It was by means of emigration that Great Britain built a world-empire. Windows are to let out the sight as well as to let in the light. The soul dies without horizon. It languishes for an outlook. A pig may live in a sty and be content never to see beyond its narrow walls; but that is because it *is* a pig. Readers of *John Halifax, Gentleman*—one of the really priceless gems of our English fiction; a book that every bride and bridegroom should read together during the first year of their married life—

will never forget the moment when poor John took his friend Phineas to see his room. They sat together on the bed. It was nothing to boast of, being a mere sacking stuffed with straw. The attic was very low and small, hardly big enough to whip a cat round, or even a kitten, yet John gazed about it with an air of proud possession.

'I declare I shall be as happy as a king,' he cried; *'only look out of the window!'*

'Ay,' continues Phineas, *'the window* was the great advantage. Out of it one could command the finest view in all Norton Bury. It was a picture which, in its incessant variety, its quiet beauty, and its inexpressibly soothing charm, was likely to make the simple every-day act of looking out of the window unconsciously influence the mind as much as a world of books.' John Halifax is one of the noblest figures in English literature; and that attic window helped to make him so.

Why, even a bird will refuse to sing if you veil its vision of the world. And certainly men and nations and churches cannot live without an outlook. They live upon landscape. Once upon a time men took it into their heads that windows were the bane of mental and spiritual development. So they built monasteries and convents. They shut the world out. They closed the window. The soul, for its supposed good, was confined within the narrow walls of cells and cloisters. And the result? The result is the

hermit, the anchorite, the monk, the solitaire. Nations have tried the same experiment, and with no better success. Japan sealed all her ports, and for two centuries lived alone. She was dead to all the world, and all the world was dead to her. But it led to intellectual and commercial stagnation, and the new day only dawned when she at length took down all the shutters, threw open all the windows, and looked out upon the world. England has for centuries stood with all her windows open. Whosoever will may come! Whosoever will may go! And English history is the best commentary on the policy of the open window. The churches tell the same story. When they have become like dungeons—self-centred and self-contained—they have languished. When they have become like observatories, with an outlook upon all the islands and continents, they have prospered and multiplied. The window is the secret of everything.

In a way, of course, it is difficult to distinguish between these two processes. The reception of the light and the projection of the sight proceed simultaneously. I am reminded of that famous entry in the journal of Robert Chambers, the founder of the great publishing house. In it he says that his life was dark and cheerless until one day, in a cupboard in an attic, he found a copy of the *Encyclopædia Britannica.* He learned from it that there were such things as literature, art, astronomy, and geology.

'It was,' he remarks, 'like cutting a window in a prison-cell, through which I saw the world and the heavens beyond.' Light and outlook came at one and the same time.

A schoolboy would argue that a window is rather to *get* out of than to *look* out of. And I am inclined to regard the schoolboy's idea as a valuable contribution to our present inquiry. Certainly, Paul would not have despised the schoolboy's suggestion. *'In Damascus,'* he tells us, *'the governor under Aretas, the king, kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me; but through a window, in a basket, was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.'* Nor would John Wesley have derided the schoolboy's contention. For John Wesley never forgot the night on which he was rescued from the burning parsonage at Epworth by being handed down from the open window. We all escape by means of the window every day. That, as the schoolboy so justly observes, is what windows are for. By means of the window we quit the confinement of four narrow walls and escape into the infinite. When the eye turns towards the window, only the body is left in the room. The soul is over the hills and far away. It has escaped. The schoolboy is right.

Windows came into fashion very early. There was a window in the ark—only one, and that one was in the roof. In time of storm it is just as well

to have a clear vision of the blue skies above rather than of the surging waters around. Is there not something very suggestive about the upward look in the life of Jesus? What meant the opened heavens just before the Temptation, and again at the Transfiguration, but a window open to the skies? 'It was,' says Professor David Smith, 'as though the veil had been drawn aside and the eternal world for a little space disclosed to His view. It was like a vision of home to the exile, like a foretaste of rest to the weary traveller. He was granted a glimpse of the glory.' Exactly! It was a glimpse of the glory; the window was in the roof. In his famous diary, Grant Duff quotes from the letter of a lady who had written him concerning a mutual friend. 'Yes,' she says, 'he may be narrow, but he always reminds me of the monk who, when some one made that remark to him, said, "Yes, I have but one window; still, *that looks towards heaven!*" '

Henry Ward Beecher used to tell of a poor woman whom he once visited, the wife of a lazy, drunken husband, whose one grief it was that her outlook upon life was so restricted. She rarely saw beyond the narrow attic in which she lived. One day a baby girl was born to her. A few weeks later she was reading her Bible, and stumbled on the promise, '*I will make thy windows of agates.*' She had no idea what an agate was; but she fondly hoped that her baby girl would be to her a window opening up a

larger horizon to her soul. So she called her *Agate!* And there was more sound philosophy in doing so than perhaps she guessed. Little children are often like the window in the ark; they direct our gaze skyward.

But are we not leaving a vast field unexplored? Do the eyes always penetrate the window-pane in but one direction? Is there no such thing as looking *in* through the window as well as looking *out* through it? To be sure there is, as Oliver Twist discovered to his horror! It is a delicate business, and must be done circumspectly and with caution. It can only be done with the consent of the person into whose window you propose to peer. Very few people would care to authorize the general public to peep through their windows with the same freedom with which it gazes through the plate-glass at an aquarium or looks through the glass cases of a museum. Most of us are a little sensitive on that point. We are very particular as to the people to whom we accord the privilege of looking in through our windows. In point of fact, there are very few of us who would bear the ordeal of that inspection at all well. How do I know? I learned it from two of my most trusted masters—a great American and a still greater Englishman. I will place the sayings of Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes and of John Wesley side by side, and their significance will flash upon the reader like a stroke of lightning.

'When,' says the Poet at the Breakfast Table, 'when it comes to talking one's common thoughts—those that come and go as the breath does; those that tread the mental areas and corridors with steady, even footfall, an interminable procession of every hue and garb—there are few, indeed, that can dare to lift the curtain which hangs before the window in the breast and throw open the window, and let us look and listen.'

So much for Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes. Does it not prove that there are not many of us who would care to turn our windows into mediums of public inspection? But lest this should seem to present a sinister view of the world, let me dismiss the American and call John Wesley. In the great man's *Journal,* under date October 16, 1771, I find the following lovely entry:

'I preached at South-Lye. Here it was that I preached my first sermon, six-and-forty years ago. One man was in my present audience who heard it, most of the rest are gone to their long home. After preaching at Witney in the evening, I met the believers apart, and was greatly refreshed among them. So simple a people I scarce ever saw. They did open the window in their breast, and it was easy to discern that God was there, filling them with joy and peace in believeing.'

'Few would care to throw open the window in the breast,' says the Poet at the Breakfast Table.

'They did open the window in their breast, and it was easy to discern that God was there,' says old John Wesley of those happy Methodists at Witney.

I fancy that Richard Jefferies was right. The window is the test. The secret of great living is to

be still and strong,
And keep my soul's large window pure from wrong.

It would be a great thing if I could keep that window so specklessly clean that it would admit the maximum of light, permit the maximum of vision, and satisfy the critical eye of Richard Jefferies. And it would be a still greater thing if, inside the window, there existed as delightful a condition of things as that which rejoiced the still more critical eye of John Wesley when he visited his society at Witney.

III

THE CHAPEL OF HATE

NETTIE CAMPBELL had an experience on Sunday which, as she unfolded it to me by the fireside last night, reminded me of an incident in *Oliver Twist*. Poor little Oliver, it will be remembered, escaped from the clutches of Fagin, the rascally old Jew who kept the thieves' kitchen, and settled down happily in his new home. But, just as he thought that he had severed every tie that bound him to the wretched life that lay behind him, he was startled by the frightful apparition of the Jew's hideous face leering in at him through the window-pane. The awful spectacle sent the blood tingling to his heart; it deprived him of his voice and of the power to move. It was the recrudescence of all that was most terrible in the grim and loathsome past. Poor little Oliver! Who has not shuddered in sympathy with him at that fateful and paralysing moment? And yet here was Nettie Campbell in precisely the same predicament!

Nettie is a gentle little thing. She has a class of boys in the Sunday School; and, although they sometimes nearly break her heart, they would cheerfully lay down their lives for her. On a recent Sun-

day she asked them to bring to her a week later all the texts they could find on the subject of love.

'There are so many passages,' she had said, 'telling us how much God loves us. See how many you can find!'

The boys had taken the task more or less seriously, according to their varied dispositions, but it was Harry Pickford who furnished the surprise.

'Please, Miss Campbell,' Harry explained, 'I found that there were so many texts about love that I didn't know where to begin, so I wrote out some texts about hate instead. The Bible says that there's a time to love and a time to hate; and it says that God hates; and it says that we ought to hate; and it says that God is angry with the people who don't hate as they ought to do. So I made out this list instead. Will that do, Miss?'

Nettie handed me the document that Harry had given her. The square white sheet of paper seemed for all the world like the square white casement of Oliver Twist's little room; and, leering at Nettie and me from the black darkness to which he belongs, we beheld with a start the phantom face of Hate!

In his *Shadow of the Sword,* Robert Buchanan describes the Chapel of Hate. It stood on a bleak and barren moor in Brittany a hundred years ago. It was in ruins; the walls were black and stained with the slime of centuries; around the crumbling altar nettles and rank weeds grew breast high; whilst

black mists, charged with rain, brooded night and day about the gloomy scene. Over the doorway of the chapel, but half obliterated, was its name. It was dedicated to Our Lady of Hate. 'Hither,' says Buchanan, 'in hours of passion and pain, came men and women to cry curses on their enemies—the maiden on her false lover, the lover on his false mistress, the husband on his false wife—praying, one and all, that Our Lady of Hate might hearken, and that the hated one might die within the year.' And, with stinging satire, the novelist adds: 'So bright and so deep had the gentle Christian light shone within their minds!' It is an ungrateful and unalluring spectacle, those spiteful worshippers nursing their malignity before that dismal shrine; and it would have been more pleasant to have turned our faces another way. But it is impossible. Here, in this schoolboy document before me, old Hate has come back to us. He has looked in through the window; and, like Oliver, after beholding the fearful apparition, we must make up our minds as to what we are going to do about it.

To begin with, we must decide, and decide promptly, as to whether there is room for Hate in a world like this. Fagin's contemporaries decided that there was no room for the wicked old Jew; so they hanged him. But if it is proposed to hang Hate, I shall certainly appear for the defence. I shall not, of course, submit that my client is alto-

gether admirable; no barrister ever does. A man on his trial for murder may have committed a fearful number of the most revolting crimes; yet, unless you can sheet home to him the particular offence with which he is now charged, you cannot send him to the gallows. I am prepared to admit that old Hate has committed many a crime in his time, but *that* will not excuse any miscarriage of justice in the present proceedings. I say again that, if you propose to hang Hate, I shall be prepared to submit that he has done nothing worthy of death, and, further, that the world will be a poorer place after his execution.

Now, before you too hastily condemn old Hate to the gallows, you must, in common fairness, hear all that can be said in extenuation. And I could call some most eminent and most weighty witnesses who will be prepared to speak kindly of him. I shall content myself with three—Plato, Johnson, and Macaulay. Dr. Johnson confessed that he liked some of his friends because they were such excellent haters. And, long before Johnson, Plato congratulated the Athenians on having exhibited towards the Persians a pure and heartfelt hatred. And, again, in analysing the enthusiasm that enabled William of Orange to make himself King of England, Macaulay finds the element of hate among the most potent ingredients. William's hatred of France was his master passion. 'Even his affection for the land

of his birth was subordinate to this feeling, which early became supreme in his soul. It mixed itself with all his passions. It impelled him to marvellous enterprises. It supported him when sinking under mortification, pain, sickness, and sorrow. Towards the close of his career, it seemed during a short time to languish; but it soon broke forth again fiercer than ever, and it continued to animate him even while the prayer for the departing was read at his bedside. The French monarchy was to him what the Roman republic was to Hannibal, what the Ottoman power was to Scanderbeg, what the English domination was to Wallace.' As I understand him, the historian is not defending, much less is he applauding, the entertainment of such deep-seated and enduring bitterness; he is merely showing that, in the empires of antiquity and in the empires of today, Hate has played a conspicuous part in knocking the world into shape.

But this is only by the way. I said just now that a man on his trial for murder may have committed a fearful number of the most revolting crimes; but unless you can sheet home to him the particular offence with which he is now charged, you cannot send him to the gallows. I recognize frankly that the converse is also true. If you *can* sheet home to him the terrible offence with which he is now charged, you dare not acquit him on the ground that, in the past, he has achieved some very commendable

exploits. We cannot reason our way, either from past infamy or from past services, to a safe conclusion as to our present verdict. I merely called these three witnesses by way of extenuation. They only show that Hate has played a great part in shaping human destiny. We shall not, however, escape from our confusion, nor see our course quite clearly, unless we go a good deal deeper. Before you sentence Hate to be hanged, it would be as well to look up a concordance—a course which, I strongly suspect, Harry Pickford has already adopted. If they follow that young student's excellent example, the gentlemen of the jury may be astonished to find so many flattering references to my client on the most sacred of all printed pages. A very wise man, whom Harry Pickford quotes, declared that there is *a time to hate;* and if there is a time for Hate, what right have you to hang him? No man has ever yet been able to interpret at all honestly the teachings of the New Testament without making room for Hate in the service of humanity. Take, for example, Sir John Seeley's *Ecce Homo.* Following upon his great chapter on 'The Law of Mercy,' Sir John has an equally fine essay on 'The Law of Resentment.' The two, he says, go together. The man who cannot be angry cannot be merciful. Goodness must hate the sight of vice. And he goes on to speak of the hatred of Jesus—the wrath of the Lamb.

Now this raises a great question. Has not the

hatred of evil, the intense and passionate hatred of everything mean and unjust and unclean, been a fine thing for this world? Has the world witnessed anything grander than the splendid anger of some of its noblest sons? Some of the greatest masterpieces of oratory in our language are nothing but fierce outbursts of unselfish wrath. What shall we say of Wilberforce's passionate protests against slavery, of Lord Shaftesbury's pitiless impeachment of the factory laws, or of Gladstone's burning denunciations of the Turkish atrocities? As those tremendous sentences fell from the lips of speakers whose eyes flamed with indignation, and whose faces were pallid with passion, and as they goaded to fury the audiences to which they were addressed, was there no spice of hate in the hearts of both speakers and hearers? And, on the whole, was not that vehement wave of emotion a lofty and a noble thing? Or, to come from public life to private, what shall we say of F. W. Robertson of Brighton, who, in one of his letters, says that he bit his lips until they bled when he met on the street a certain man whom he knew to be luring a pure young girl to her destruction? Was there no heart of hate behind those bleeding lips? And do we not think more of the man because that heart of hate was there?

No, no, gentlemen of the jury, we must not allow Hate to be hanged. *'A time to hate,'* says the wise man. We must do for the prisoner at the bar what

we should do for all such unfortunates. We must remove him from those departments of human activity in which he does so much harm, and employ him in those enterprises in which he may become a public benefactor.

When Katherine Mansfield lay dying, she made some singularly pathetic entries in her *Journal*. 'I am a dead woman,' she wrote, 'and I don't care! And yet how I adored life and dreaded death! But there are a heap of things I'd like to do before I go. I'd like to write a long, long story on the subject of *Hate!*' I have often wondered what she would have written—she who so loved Love.

She would, I fancy, have shown that Love and Hate are closely and intimately related, so closely and intimately related that, wherever you find the one, the other is never very far away. As a typical instance of the great historic hates, Macaulay, in the passage I just now quoted, cites the case of Wallace and his hatred of England. But the sword on which Wallace swore his deathless hatred of England was the sword that had pierced the breast of his young and beautiful wife! His animosity was therefore the other side of his affection. It was Hereward the Wake's tender devotion to his beloved Torfrida, whom his enemies had pledged themselves to burn as a witch, that led him to take his famous vow of implacable hatred of William the Conqueror and his Norman knights.

Here, then, is the principle on which my hates must be based! I must learn to *love* loftily. If my loves are wisely directed, my hates will do nothing but good. Macaulay hated dandelions; but he never hated them until he started gardening. As soon as he learned to love his flower-beds he developed a fierce hatred of all weeds. Clearly, therefore, we must not hang Hate. There is a place for him in the world, and it is a large place. He has a great work to do, and it is a good work. If I can teach myself to love, and to love steadily and intensely, the highest and the best, then, depend upon it, I shall develop some colossal hates! But they will be just and wholesome hates, every one of them. 'Give me,' cried John Wesley, 'a hundred men who fear nothing but God, who *hate nothing but sin,* and who know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and I will shake the world.' John Wesley knew that hate could be drilled and disciplined and made capable of the most valuable and beneficent service.

IV

IAN MELVILLE'S WILL

In the old days, when John Broadbanks was minister at Silverstream, and I at Mosgiel, he and I became wonderfully expert in the art of making people's wills. Among the earlier settlers on the Plain there was a sort of superstition on this subject. A man's last will and testament was held to be such a solemn instrument that nobody but the minister ought to draft that awful deed. When old Andrew Moss met Jamie Montgomery on his way to the railway station one morning, and learned that he was going to town to have his will drawn up by a firm of solicitors, Andrew mourned Jamie's depravity for the rest of the day. In Andrew's view, Jamie had fallen from grace and had profaned one of life's most sacred rites. 'Mon,' he exclaimed dolefully, as he told us that evening of his melancholy experience, 'Jamie's clear forgotten himsel'; we'll sune be hearing that he's having his dochters marrit at the registry office!' The two things were of parallel significance to Andrew's mind.

I remember arriving at the Silverstream Manse one Monday morning and finding John engaged.

'It's old Ian Melville,' Lilian explained. 'He came

soon after breakfast and begged John to make his will right away; but he can't be long now.'

She had scarcely finished speaking when the study door opened, and John and Ian came out. I knew Ian slightly. He was a farmer across the Plain, who, after an apparently incurable bachelorhood, had astonished everybody by marrying when fairly advanced in life; and the overwhelming excitement of his career was the birth of his boy. Ian must have been nearly sixty when the little fellow came to him; and, from that hour, he could scarcely bear to let Ronald out of his sight.

'Oh, I say, this is fortunate,' exclaimed John on catching sight of me; and then, turning to Ian, he continued, 'we can finish this business right away and get it off your mind; we two,—indicating himself and myself—'will act as witnesses.'

'Aye,' said Ian, a few minutes later, as I laid aside the pen at the termination of the requisite formalities, 'I've been getting Mr. Broadbanks here to make my will; but it isn't much, after all, that a man can leave to his bairn. I can leave Ronald the farm and the stock and any money there may be; but, my, he'd be a mighty sight richer if I could leave him my experience of the world, my knowledge of things about the farm, and'—his eyes moistened—'and my faith!'

I have often thought of it since. The longer a man lives, the more clearly he sees that the treasure

he can bequeath to others represents but an insignificant fraction of life's total wealth. Take Henry Ryecroft as a case in point; and Henry Ryecroft was the last man in the world to despise the value of money. On the contrary. 'You tell me,' he says, almost savagely, 'you tell me that money cannot buy the things most precious. Your commonplace proves that you have never known the lack of it. When I think of all the sorrow and the barrenness that has been wrought in my life by want of a few more pounds per annum that I was able to earn, I stand aghast at money's significance. What kindly joys have I lost—those simple forms of happiness to which every heart has claim—because of poverty! Meetings with those I loved made impossible year after year; sadness, misunderstanding, nay, cruel alienation arising from inability to do the things I wished, and which I might have done had a little money helped me; endless instances of homely pleasure and contentment curtailed or forbidden by narrow means. Solitude often cursed my life because I was poor.' And yet, towards the close of his life, he marshalled, in grateful restrospect, all the most joyous and delightful experiences he had ever known. And, in doing so, the thing that surprised him most was the fact that the pleasures that stood out most prominently in his memory were the pleasures that had come to him without money and without price. His strolls in country lanes; his long,

familiar chats with congenial companions; his relish of common foods and simple fruits; his enjoyment of certain books picked up cheaply at a second-hand stall; his memories of gorgeous sunsets that transfigured sea and land, of moonlight nights when the fields sparkled with the frost, and the river was like a stream of molten silver, of the russet tints of autumn and the delicate sweetness of spring—it was a medley of such images that rushed back upon his mind as he took stock of life's lordliest treasure. No man can leave such wealth to those who come after him. Each must accumulate it for himself or else for ever go without it.

And yet there is something to be said from another point of view. It forced itself upon my mind when Gyp died. Gyp, as readers of *The Silver Shadow* know, was John Broadbanks' dog, and, as I have explained, he was a dog with a history. When he died, John was terribly upset. All that day, he could talk of nothing but Gyp's uncanny sagacity; of the useful habits that he had acquired in the course of the years; and of the wealth of experience that he had slowly and painfully amassed.

'And now,' John added sadly, 'he's dead, and all this hoard of valuable dog-wisdom has perished with him! There seems to be something wrong somewhere; a prodigious amount of waste appears to take place at that point.'

It does seem like it; and yet, when you go into

the matter a little more carefully, you come to the conclusion that the difficulty is more apparent than real. Do we not—dogs and men—bequeath our wisdom to our successors? Is there not a sense in which the accumulated experience of each generation takes to itself the nature of an inheritance and is passed on for the guidance of the next? The burned child, we say, dreads the fire. That is fairly obvious; but it opens up a larger and more thorny question. To what extent does a child shrink from the flame on account of vague, inborn memories of the tortures which his ancestors endured whenever they took undue liberties with the devouring element? The scientists speak with no uncertainty at this point. Darwin declares positively that, when brought into contact with Man, the animals acquire caution, and bequeath it to their offspring. Leroy says that, in districts where foxes are much hunted, the young, on first leaving their burrows, are incontestably much more wary than are the old ones in districts where foxes are not much disturbed. And Houzeau, a very great naturalist, points out that, when telegraph posts were first set up, large numbers of birds were destroyed by flying against the wires; but that, after a few generations had come and gone, an accident of this kind became an exceedingly rare occurrence.

Nor are we altogether at the mercy of savants and schoolmen. The problem is not exclusively an aca-

demic one. Those who write, not as scientists but as bushmen, invariably take for granted the transmission of experience from generation to generation. Jack London, for example, harps upon this chord with almost tiresome iteration. In one of his books he speaks of the fear of the wild thing for a trap—in a creature that had never seen a trap. He speaks elsewhere of the instinctive reverence of the animal for man—'out of the eyes of his ancestors was the cub now looking upon man.' He speaks of the suspicion with which the newly-born regards the unknown—'a fear that is the legacy of the wild, a fear that has come down to him from a remote ancestry through a thousand thousand lives.' He speaks of the fear of death—in a creature that has never seen death. And he speaks of the instinctive hatred of the dog for the wolf—'the inherited memory of an ancient feud.' The assumption colours every page. Now I have taken the works of Jack London merely because they are so typical; but any of the popular books which have been written in our time to portray the life of the field and the forest could have been made to point the same moral and adorn the same tale. Indeed, there is no reason to resort to literature at all. Within a mile of this house a horse became intractable the other day on the approach of a travelling menagerie. The driver jumped down and attempted to lead it past the covered vans in which the wild beasts were enclosed;

but the horse fell dead beside him. Not for countless generations had the ancestors of the horse been in touch with wolves and tigers; yet the fear survived, and, at the very smell of the ancient enemies of its breed, the creature became paralysed with terror.

But I have said enough—too much, perhaps—about animals. John Broadbanks, and his remarks about poor old Gyp, have overshadowed for the moment the sturdy figure of Ian Melville and his remarks about his will.

'It isn't much, after all, that a man can leave to his bairn,' he said, 'I can leave Ronald the farm and the stock and any money there may be; but, my, he'd be a mighty sight richer if I could leave him my experience of the world, my knowledge of things about the farm, and—my faith!'

One feels a vast amount of sympathy with Ian Melville. For, strangely enough, the law by which memory crystallizes into instinct, and instinct becomes hereditary, operates more languidly and uncertainly in the case of men than in the case of brutes. 'The most marvellous thing in connexion with heredity,' as Principal Fairbairn points out, 'is not what we *do* inherit but what *we do not*. It is pathetic and significant that the thing that the child most needs and would most profit by—the experience of the parent—is the very thing it does not receive, but has to gain for itself in the bitter way

common to all its ancestors.' This, it will be seen, is Ian Melville's complaint exactly. But there is something else to be said. We must not too hastily conclude that, as compared with the beasts, Man is at a disadvantage. To begin with, Man is so constituted that he has offspring under his tutelage immensely longer than is the case among the animals. And then again, Man is endowed with the extraordinary power of passing on his experience from generation to generation by word of mouth, and, as though this were not enough, he can even place it on indelible and indestructible record. He can describe his pains and his pleasures, his gains and his losses, his mistakes and his triumphs, with the utmost clearness and lucidity. Nature abhors a wastage of energy; and, since she has provided Man with so effective an instrument by which he can communicate his experiences to his most remote descendants, she feels under no obligation to bring to perfection less appropriate and less reliable contrivances.

As a result of this descent of intellectual wealth from generation to generation, we are millionaires on our arrival on the planet! 'What,' asks Emerson, 'what is our knowledge but the amassed thought and experience of innumerable minds: our language, our science, our religion, our opinions, our fancies, are all inherited. Our country, customs, laws, ambitions, and our notions of fit and fair—all these we

never made: we found them ready-made: we do but quote them.' And so the history of Man blends with the history of the brutes in vindicating the claim of the scientists that Experience—which, as Ian Melville says, is life's most priceless hoard—is actually bequeathed as an inheritance from generation to generation.

It is wonderful how much of the father's wisdom may descend to the son if the parent avails himself of all the channels by which it is ordained that that precious store may be communicated. Much the same is true of faith. Ian's eyes moistened as he lamented his inability to convey his faith to his boy in the document to which we had just set our signatures. And yet Faith likes to pass on from father to son, generation after generation. That is an exquisitely beautiful passage in which Paul likens Faith to a pilgrim passing on her journey down the ages. She took up her abode, he writes to Timothy, 'Faith took up her abode in the heart of thy grandmother, Lois; and then she dwelt in the heart of thy mother, Eunice; and now I am persuaded that she has made her home in thine heart also.' There is a certain domestic fidelity about the pilgrim Faith. She is fond of families. She loves to pass from father to son and from mother to daughter. If only Ian Melville will take good care to introduce her to Ronald; if he will speak well of her, and make her seem homely and lovable and engaging in the boy's

eyes, then, beyond the shadow of a doubt, Faith will rejoice to dwell in the heart of the youth as she dwelt in the heart of his father before him.

V

AN INTERRUPTED HONEYMOON

I

A STRANGE thing happened when the world was very young—so the North American Indians say. The great gods made men, but found them disappointing. The world lacked beauty and poetry and romance. So they made women. And when men saw the women whom the gods had made, they forsook their fields and their flocks and abandoned themselves to limitless love-making. The forests simply swarmed with happy couples sauntering hand in hand, transported by the rapture of this novel and exquisite experience. Life became one endless honeymoon. The crops in the neglected fields grew rank and went to ruin. The flocks and herds became the defenceless prey of the lynx and the wolf. Then the gods felt very sorry for the happy lovers in the woods. And they took counsel and asked each other how they could save these amorous men and maidens from the starvation that must surely overtake them if the fields failed and the flocks perished. And the gods determined to curse the forest for men's sake. So they created the mosquito and gave him the woods for his habitation.

And the lovers lingered there no longer! Each man took his bride back to the fields that he had forsaken, and built for her a home. And, in tilling the soil and tending the flocks, each couple found its truest happiness and prosperity.

2

It was on the last day of my sojourn among the Gippsland lakes that this quaint fragment of Iroquois mythology came back to me. I was perched on a grassy knoll near the waterside—the virgin bush behind me, the shining lake spread out before. My only companions were the birds. A flock of parrots were flying noisily to and fro away to my right; a pair of laughing jackasses were making merry on a bough almost directly above me; a tall grey crane was stalking sedately among the driftwood on the shore; a score of wild swans flew in V-shape formation overhead; whilst a rocky island less than a hundred yards away was white with pelicans. After drinking it all in for awhile, I drew from my pocket a book. It was Rex Beach's *Ne'er-Do-Well.* The plot is a suggestive one. Kirk Anthony, the ne'er-do-well, is the son of a millionaire. In a drunken frolic his companions take him, in a state of intoxication, and place him on a ship just sailing for Panama. On arrival, he climbs a hilltop and gazes upon a spectacle that takes away his breath and electrifies his being. He sees an innumerable

army of men shattering the spine of a continent and uniting the two great oceans of the world. He looks up and down the huge valley, and, like so many ants, he sees men swarming in myriads everywhere. By means of the most weird, fantastic, and prodigious devices of skilful engineers, he sees them shovelling away mountains as though they were molehills. Gigantic towers speed hither and thither on shining tracks of steel. Gaunt arms reach down as though from the clouds, seize in their iron grasp ponderous masses of unbroken rock and bear them away as though they were but pebbles. The wonder of the scene captivates Kirk's imagination.

'Say,' he exclaims, 'but this is great! It must be fine to be doing something worth while!'

He cannot shake off the impression. He thinks of it all day and dreams of it all night. And at last, seeking out the men who have it in their power to employ him, he offers to do anything, however humble, if only he may have a part in so titanic an enterprise.

And Rex Beach shows how, by throwing himself into his work, the ne'er-do-well became one of the princeliest of men. It was this that brought to my mind the legend of the interrupted honeymoons. And it was this that explained to me why it was that, welcome and delightful as had been the holiday, I was enjoying the prospect of a return to work on the morrow.

3

And, now that I am once more in the thick of things, it seems to me that this old Indian myth contains a flash of real spiritual insight. There is something very like it in the Creation story with which the Bible opens; and there is something very like it in the Resurrection story with which the Bible closes. To the Creation first! 'And unto Adam God said: Cursed be the ground for thy sake.' *'For thy sake!'* In the Indian legend it was out of pity for the thoughtless lovers that the gods sent the mosquitoes. Unto men they said: 'Cursed be the forest *for thy sake;* flies and mosquitoes shall it bring forth to thee!' And surely, in the Bible record, it was out of pity and tenderness toward men that God said: 'Cursed be the ground *for thy sake;* thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee!'

For thy sake! mark you. 'I have learned,' says Michael Fairless, in *The Roadmender,* 'I have learned to understand dimly the truth of these three great paradoxes—the Voice of Silence, the Companionship of Solitude, and the *Blessing of a Curse.*' That is it, exactly. The blessing of a curse. Mercies often masquerade.

The story from the other end of the Bible is the story of Mary Magdalene. It is one of the sweetest idylls in our Christian literature. Mary stood amidst the lilies and the angels—representatives of the glory

of two worlds—and wept! *'Jesus saith unto her: Why weepest thou? . . . Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.'* And Mary left the lilies and the angels—and the weeping. She lost her misery in finding a mission. More often than we fancy, it is toil that dries our tears.

To these stories it would be easy to add a sheaf of others. How was Dante comforted when Beatrice died? He lost himself in his work. How were Charles and Mary Lamb comforted during those awful days in which life's blackest cloud hung gloomily over them? Those who have read their books know. And who can forget that scene under the great baobab tree in the heart of Africa when David Livingstone laid the body of his wife to rest? His journal becomes a broken-hearted moan, a pitiful sob. For the first time in his life, he says that he would be content to die. But see! 'For such comfort as could be obtained in these dark days he turned again to his work.' So declares his biographer. And see what he himself says: 'The sweat of one's brow,' he writes, 'is no longer a curse; it proves a tonic.' As the great pathfinder pressed his way, with aching heart, among the perilous jungles and pestilential swamps of his great Dark Continent, he never ceased to give thanks for the comfort that his lifework constantly administered to him.

4

Mrs. Gummidge—as every reader of *David Copperfield* knows full well—was a 'lone, lorn creetur'.' She said so herself, and nobody ought to know better. Indeed, she said so some tens of thousands of times, so there could be no reasonable doubt in the mind of any sane man on that particular subject—so absorbing, if not absolutely fascinating, to Mrs. Gummidge. 'My troubles has made me contrairy,' she moaned. 'I had better go into the workhouse and die. I am a lone, lorn creetur', and had much better not make myself contrairy here.'

Such was Mrs. Gummidge! The years passed, but they brought no improvement either in the old lady herself or in her dark surroundings.

Indeed, they brought at last a blinding, staggering calamity when all the lights in Peggotty's little cottage on Yarmouth Beach seemed to be suddenly and cruelly blown out.

Mr. Peggotty was about to start off in his long sad search for his darling but prodigal daughter—'little Em'ly.' 'You'll be a solitary woman here, I'm afeerd,' said Mr. Peggotty.

'No, no, Dan'l,' she returned—and such words from Mrs. Gummidge seemed like the blithe song of the nightingale suddenly breaking forth from the throat of a raven;—'I shan't be that. Don't you mind me! I shall have enough to do to keep a home for you agin you come back, Dan'l!'

And David Copperfield—that is to say, Charles Dickens—bursts into wondering admiration at the sudden and extraordinary transformation.

'What a change in Mrs. Gummidge in a little time! She was another woman. She was so devoted, she had such a quick perception of what it would be well to say, and what it would be well to leave unsaid; she was so forgetful of herself, and so regardful of the sorrow about her, that I held her in a sort of veneration. The work she did that day! And, as to deploring her misfortunes, she appeared to have forgotten that she had ever had any! In short, I left her, when I went away at night, the prop and staff of Mr. Peggotty's affliction; and *I could not meditate enough upon the lesson that I read in Mrs. Gummidge, and the new experience she unfolded to me.*'

Now, what was that wonderful lesson? It was simply this—the thorns and thistles that had been suddenly sprinkled in Mrs. Gummidge's life were sprinkled there *for her sake!* They gave her work to do, and in doing that work she was positively transfigured.

5

Is it any wonder, then, that the Indians spoke very tenderly of the gods who cursed the forest with mosquitoes? Did not these beneficent deities save those forefathers in that strange way from the

horrors of starvation? Is it less suggestive or less beautiful that the ancient records run: 'And God said unto Adam: Cursed be the ground for thy sake —*for thy sake!'?* And surely the splendours of the Apocalypse are enhanced rather than dimmed by the fact that such emphasis is laid upon the ceaseless services and busy activities of the radiant life within the veil.

That was the sublime revelation that broke upon the delighted soul of Arthur, in *Tom Brown's Schooldays,* in the course of his dreadful sickness. It was a grief to Arthur that he was so delicate and frail: he had never been able to run and climb and play and fight like other boys. And he was afraid that he would never be able to work like other men. Then came the fever; and Arthur went down into the Valley of the Shadow. In his delirium he saw a river.

'And on the other bank of the great river,' he tells Tom Brown, 'I saw men and women and children rising up pure and bright; and the tears were wiped from their eyes; and they put on glory and strength; and all weariness and pain fell away. And they worked at some great work. They *all* worked. Each worked in a different way, but all at the same work. And I saw myself, Tom; and I was toiling at a piece of the same work. And then I woke up.'

And so Arthur was comforted. It is good to know that, after sin and sorrow and sickness, and

all the symptoms of the ancient curse, have been at last entirely eliminated, we shall still have left to us the taintless source from which we have been accustomed to draw our most invigorating and satisfying consolations. We shall still be able to work. Mr. Kipling is a true prophet:

> And only the Master shall praise us, and only the Master shall blame;
> And no one shall work for money, and no one shall work for fame;
> But each for the joy of working, and each in his separate star,
> Shall draw the Thing as he sees it, for the God of things as they are!

By that time we shall have learned the lesson that the mosquitoes were sent to teach. The highest felicity lies, not in everlasting lovemaking, but in everlasting labour—toil without tedium, and work without weariness.

VI

THE SILENT CURFEW

I

It was a delicious summer's evening and the children demurred against being packed off to bed. As it happened, I had no engagements.

'Well, I'll tell you what we'll do!' I exclaimed. 'Put on your hats and we'll run along to the clearing among the fir-trees where you saw old Grunter, the opossum, the other evening. We'll sit on the mound telling stories till the stars come out; and then home like a shot to bed!'

The proposal was carried unanimously. In ten minutes we were clustered on that grassy mound in the corner of the clearing which the children love so well. Having satisfied ourselves that the opossum was not in his old place, we settled down to telling tales. I had told the story of the Wonderful Tar-baby, of Brer Rabbit's adventure with the mosquitoes, of the way in which Brer Wolf said grace, and of the Moon in the Millpond; and I was just about to explain why Brer Possum has no hair on his tail when I detected a tell-tale look in Frank's eye. He had seen a star! I looked up and saw it too.

'Ah,' he pleaded, 'but you didn't say "when *a star* comes out," but "when *the stars* come out!" '

I told the story about Brer Possum's tail; by that time several stars were twinkling above us; in accordance with our agreement, we hurried home; and in half an hour they were all tucked away for the night. Later in the evening we older children were enjoying supper on the verandah. By that time the sky glittered with stars innumerable. I told of my experience with the children on the mound.

'Why,' exclaimed their mother, 'it's something like the story from Nehemiah that you read at prayers the other day.'

I went in and looked it up. *'So,'* says Nehemiah, in his account of the rebuilding of the city, *'so we laboured in the work from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared.'*

'Till the stars appeared!' My companion vanished into the house with the supper-things; but she had left me something to think about.

2

We work until the stars appear. They are heaven's silent curfew. By evening we are like tired children, and when God wraps the world in darkness, it is His way of putting away our playthings for the night. It was a tremendous undertaking, the rebuilding of Jerusalem. I can see the swarms of men, looking like thousands and thousands of

ants, as they work away at the wall all day. I can see them laying down their tools when the stars appear.. They stand back, and, in the twilight, survey the progress that the day has made. They mentally compare the level at which they left the wall last night with the level to which it has risen to-day. The glow of honest pride with which they turn their backs upon the scene of their industry is toil's sweetest recompense. They can lift their faces to the heavens without confusion. Therein lies our only practical astronomy.

As I lingered on the moonlit verandah that summer's evening, I saw, only a few feet from me, a most perfect rose. Once or twice a soft breath of wind caught its perfume and wafted it towards me. In the morning, it was little more than a bud; it had opened its heart to the glory of the summer day; and now it seemed almost waxen in its rich, luxurious loveliness. *From the rising of the morning till the stars appeared,* it had woven every sparkling ray of sunshine into the texture of its beauty. As it gazed skywards in the starlight, it seemed eager that each shining orb should know that, of the golden day just past, not one precious moment had been wasted. The sun had vanished in the west and was painting the petals of other flowers in other lands, yet, transformed into floral comeliness and delicate fragrance, its radiance remained in my garden. The rose had grown in beauty as the hours sped by.

The stars must be a torture to the soul that cannot face them with the rose's satisfaction. Their myriad spearpoints must seem to stab the conscience to the quick. For the sunlight comes to the soul, as it comes to the rose, that the soul may grow in grace and sweetness. With the soul, as with the rose, the period between the rising of the morning and the coming of the stars is the harvest-time, the time of treasure-trove. She must make the most of it. She will never grow in grace year by year unless she grows in grace day by day. The stars are heaven's searchlight; they pierce the deepest recesses of my being; they ask me what I *am* to-night that I was *not* this morning. Dawn found the rose a bud; dusk found it a beauteous blossom. Unless I am a better man at sunset than I was at sunrise, the day has come out of its native eternities in vain. My soul is a stagnant soul. And so, sitting there in the hush and the starlight, I listened to the voice of the rose.

'Every day,' it seemed to say, *'let your own soul be the object of your anxious care and constant attendance. Be sorry for its impurities, its spots and imperfections; and study all the holy arts of restoring it to its natural and primitive purity. Delight in its service and beg of God to adorn it with every grace and perfection. Nourish it with good works; give it peace in solitude; give it strength in prayer; make it wise with reading; enlighten it by meditation; make it tender with love; sweeten it with humility;*

humble it with penance; enliven it with psalms and hymns; and comfort it with frequent reflections upon future glory!'

The words are the words of William Law; but the voice was the voice of the rose. Law's appeal to Serena concerning the culture of her soul was lying open on my desk in the study at the moment; but the rose repeated the solemn charge, word for word, as I loitered on the verandah.

3

The day is not over when the stars come out. With silent footsteps they appear, one by one, in the twilight, and put up the shutters of the day. But I had learned, only a week or so before, that the day's work does not end with the putting up of the shutters. I found myself sitting in the front of the tram next to a tall gentleman in a soft felt hat and suit of navy blue, the manager of a well-known bank.

'I suppose,' he said, 'that most people think that, when we close our doors at three o'clock, our day's work is over. Why,' he exclaimed, 'that's when it begins! Until then, people are rushing in and rushing out bringing money and taking money, cashing cheques and banking cheques; arranging loans and mortgages and overdrafts; everything is in confusion. But at three o'clock we can open the books and settle down to work. We sift things out and enter them up and see how we stand.'

I thought the stars looked stern as this memory rushed back upon me. How, I wondered, did *my* affairs stand now that the day had closed and my account was being made up? Nehemiah and his men had the satisfaction, when they left the wall at dusk, of seeing it just so much higher than it stood at daylight. My life-work is invisible. I am like the men who bustle up and down outside the closed bank whilst their accounts are being made up within. I know that no mistake will be made. I know that every cup of water put to thirsty lips will be set down to my credit. Yet I wished, as I looked skywards with such thoughts in my mind, that I had put my account in a stronger position before the shutters went up for the day.

4

There is something in what Frank said. I promised that we should remain on the mound till *the stars* appeared. We were not, therefore, compelled to go as soon as *one star* twinkled in the sky. Nehemiah's men acted on a similar principle. They were in no hurry to leave. Adam Bede would have found himself in very congenial company among those builders. We all remember the carpenter's shop at Hayslope. The church clock began to strike six. 'Before the first stroke had died away, Sandy Jim had loosed his plane and was reaching for his jacket; Wiry Ben had left a screw half-driven in and

thrown his screwdriver into his tool-basket; Mum Taft had flung down his hammer as he was in the act of lifting it; and Seth Bede, straightening his back, was putting out his hand towards his paper cap. Adam alone had gone on with his work as if nothing had happened. But, observing the cessation of the tools, he looked up, and, in a tone of indignation, exclaimed:

'Look here, now! I can't abide to see men throw away their tools i' that way the minute the clock begins to strike. I hate to see a man's arms drop down, as if he was shot, before the clock's fairly struck, just as if he'd never a bit o' pride and delight in his work and was afraid o' doing a stroke too much. Why, the very grindstone 'ull go on turning a bit after you loose it!'

'You didn't say when *a star* comes out, but when *the stars* come out!' pleaded Frank.

Nehemiah's men felt that the work of rebuilding the Holy City lent a lustre to their lives, and they grudged the time that the darkness compelled them to spend in sleep and inactivity. The stars never shine so splendidly as when they look down upon men of such a mould.

5

Oh, that first star! Frank's contention was sound, it is true; and yet, after that star appeared, the evening was never the same again. We all knew

that our stay on the mound was only a matter of minutes.

The first star! The first grey hair! The first pair of spectacles! It is by such gentle monitions that we are warned that the day is drawing to its close. We need not turn to go. We need not even loose our hold on life. But, if we be wise, we shall highly resolve to make the most of the time that still remains to us. 'You and I are old,' said Ulysses to the sailors who had shared all his voyages and his perils—

> you and I are old;
> Old age hath yet his honor and his toil;
> Death closes all: but something ere the end,
> Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
> Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
> The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:
> The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep
> Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
> Tho' much is taken, much abides ; and tho'
> We are not now that strength which in old days
> Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;
> One equal temper of heroic hearts,
> Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
> To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

Depend upon it, Nehemiah's men worked neither more swiftly nor more slowly after the first star shone. They did not ply their tools with the frantic haste of men who had wasted the daylight and were trying to atone in the dusk. Nor did they work like men who are weary. They just worked on till a

few more stars twinkled above them and then went home.

6

I envy Nehemiah's men the feelings with which they retired to rest after working until starlight on the wall. Nothing is so sweet at night-time as the memory of a long day's work well done. There are no back moves in the greatest game of all. If, beneath a noonday sun, I have shirked my duty or scamped my work, the stars look down reproachfully at night. Their pitiless scrutiny may lead me to repentance but they are powerless to absolve me. In their sight I have committed the unpardonable sin.

But to have risen early! And to have worked hard! And to have persisted in my task until the stars appeared! That is the joy that makes the stars feel like a crown of jewels about one's brow at night. Here, before me, is the letter of an old man of ninety-three! Sir George Burns was, as everybody knows, the founder of the Cunard Steamship Company and the pioneer of trans-Atlantic travel. He was a prodigious worker and a Christian of the sturdy Scottish type. And here he is, in his ninety-fourth year, looking back upon life. Under a sky that is crowded with stars he is reviewing his long day's work.

'Mine has been a highly prosperous career,' he says, 'and I am most thankful for it. But in looking

back as I do now, this reflection gives me no real satisfaction; there is nothing in that fact upon which I can rest. But when I read, as I have been reading lately, letters written by myself as a young man sixty or seventy years ago, and when I find that *then* I was fully decided for Christ, *that* knowledge indeed rejoices my heart in my old age.'

The man to whom the stars of evening suggest such thoughts as these is listening, if ever man listened, to the music of the spheres.

VII

CHRISSY

It is with a trepidation almost amounting to terror that I set out to write on *Servants*. Others have done the same thing, and retribution has swiftly overtaken them. Some years ago the editor of one of the greatest London journals addressed himself, in a leading article, to the delicate theme, and was sharply rapped over the knuckles for his pains. The paper was scarcely published when a letter arrived from one of the most eminent of living Englishmen. 'Sir,' said John Ruskin, 'you so seldom write nonsense that you will, I am sure, pardon your friends for telling you when you do. Your article on *Servants* to-day is sheer nonsense.' With this classical example on record, no man in his sober senses would lightly court a similar castigation.

Yet what am I to do? For the theme that I have indicated monopolizes all my mind. I have just returned from the marriage of Chrissy Proctor. Chrissy is a charming girl; she is one of our most faithful and dependable workers at the church; and a welcome visitor in all our homes. How well I remember our introduction! It happened that, after tea one summer evening, I was going out to pay one

or two urgent calls. As I stepped down the garden path I noticed a young girl timidly approach the gate, pause as though in uncertainty, and then continue her walk up the street. She gave me the impression that she had intended calling, but that, seeing me about to leave the house, she had changed her mind. I quickened my steps and soon overtook her. Finding that my surmise was correct, I insisted on her return. She had, she explained, been attending the church on Sunday evenings. She had felt that she would love to become a communicant. Did I think that she was worthy to take so solemn a step? I had a delightful talk with her, and, when she rose to go, she gave me her name and address.

'Is this your father's home, Chrissy?' I asked, pointing to the scrap of paper on which I had just scribbled.

'Oh, no,' she said, blushing a little, 'I am *only a servant* there!'

'Only a servant!' I married her to-day; and I learned at the wedding how much more than a servant Chrissy really was. Mr. and Mrs. Penfold, Chrissy's master and mistress, are not church people; but, as Chrissy's parents are in England, they insisted on her being married from their home. They could not have done things more daintily for a favourite daughter. 'Chrissy is the best friend that we, and the children, have ever had!' her master said to me.

'Only a servant!' And a blush! It made me feel that I should like to preach a special sermon to servants. I would get out a neat little card announcing my intention. I would go from house to house delivering personally the invitations to that special service. As, time after time, my ring at the bell was answered by a trim figure in cap and apron, I would hand her the announcement and tell her of the pleasure with which I should recognize her face in the congregation. On reflection, however, I saw that such an effort would be foredoomed to failure. Chrissy's blush proved it. For a girl who blushed to confess that she was *only a servant* would be unlikely to attend a service at which, by her very presence, she publicly proclaimed herself one.

Yet why that blush? Servants are the only people in the world who do not know what an infinite comfort a good servant really is. And servants are the only people in the world who do not recognize what vast authority a good servant invariably wields. I myself made this discovery very early. In *The Silver Shadow* I have told of the way in which, as a small boy, I used to go with my father to see old Mrs. Faulkner. But I made no reference, in that earlier essay, to Mrs. Faulkner's maid. Yet nobody ever went to see Mrs. Faulkner without falling in love with old Charlotte. Charlotte had been with Mrs. Faulkner since Mrs. Faulkner was a bride. Charlotte was really mistress of the house, although she

never suspected it, and certainly Mrs. Faulkner never did. There seemed to be very little difference between their ages. It was very pretty to see the old servant attending upon her old mistress in her old-fashioned courtly way. A wonderfully wise woman was Charlotte. Every day of her life she coaxed Mrs. Faulkner into doing things that the old lady had determined not to do; and dissuaded her from doing things that she was firmly resolved to do; and she did it so cleverly that the new volition always seemed to come from the mind of the mistress rather than from the mind of the maid. Charlotte bowed so respectfully and smiled so submissively, and said 'Yes, ma'am,' and 'No, ma'am,' in such a deferential tone that she entirely concealed the effort that she was making to subvert the decision of her obstinate mistress. The two minds appeared to be in the completest harmony. Sometimes, for example, the old lady would stubbornly refuse to attend to papers that imperatively demanded her signature. Charlotte, hovering watchfully about the room, would see the look of perplexity on my father's face.

'You don't want to be worried with the nasty things any more, do you, ma'am?' she would suddenly interject. 'You would like to sign them and be rid of them, wouldn't you, ma'am?' And she would hand her mistress the pen in a way so mandatory and yet so sympathetic that it did not occur to Mrs. Faulkner that, in signing, she was doing the very

thing that a minute before she had resolutely declined to do. When Charlotte said: 'You would like to do so-and-so, wouldn't you, ma'am?' she made the old lady feel that the course suggested was the very one that she herself was most anxious to pursue.

When Chrissy blushed at confessing herself *'only a servant'* she forgot that society is based on service. The greater the number of those who serve, the more nearly does society approximate to the ideal. Upon the loftiest, as well as upon the lowliest, there rests the same imperative obligation.

When the Archbishop of York preached at the Coronation of King Edward, he chose as his text the words, *'I am among you as he that serveth.'* It is the supreme dignity of the king to be of service to his people. On the crest of the Prince of Wales are inscribed the words *'I serve.'* When the Prime Minister calls together the members of the Imperial Cabinet, the official summons reads that 'the servants of the King are commanded to meet.' The King—a servant; the Prince—a servant; the Prime Minister—a servant! The apostolic epistles begin *'Paul, a servant.'* Service is the luxury of life. I was reminded of this the other afternoon. On entering Port Phillip Heads, after a short voyage across the Straits, the steamer on which I happened to be travelling passed a tiny little tug which was heroically pulling a huge but helpless vessel immensely

larger than itself. The tug looked ridiculously small, yet we all raised our hats to it. It was made great by the services that it rendered. I thought of Huxley, who used to say, if he could not be a man, he should like to be a tug. And I thought of *The Lady of the Decoration.* 'Out of the wreckage of my old life,' writes that most amiable personage, 'I've managed to build a fairly respectable craft. It has taken me just four years to realize that it is not a pleasure-boat. To-night I realize once for all that it is a very modest little tug, and wherever it can tow anything or anybody into harbour, there it belongs and there it stays!'

Only a tug! but what could the big liners do without the tugs?

Only a servant! but what could Mr. and Mrs. Penfold have done without Chrissy?

For that sermon that can never be preached—the sermon to servants—I have not yet chosen a text. But there will be no difficulty about that. Dr. Jowett has reminded us that when Charles Kingsley was first married, and set up a home, he and his wife sought out all the passages in the New Testament that in any way revealed the will of Christ concerning the relationship between masters and servants. And the words of their Master on that practical subject so dominated their behaviour that the ordinary severities of life were changed into gracious courtesies; gentleness took the place of harshness, and en-

during intimacy supplanted cold reserve. And, as a result, when Charles Kingsley died, all the servants in the house had lived with him through periods varying from seventeen to twenty-six years! No, there will be no difficulty about a text. The Bible lays great stress on a servant's influence. Take two instances—one of each sex. Naaman could never have been healed of his leprosy but for the wisdom and courage of a little captive maid. The maid knew all about the prophet and all about the source of his power. *'And she said unto her mistress; Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for He would recover him of his leprosy.'* Ten thousand evangelistic addresses have been delivered on the cleansing of Naaman; by means of those addresses hundreds of thousands of men and women, conscious of their secret defilement, have been led to the fountain of all healing and grace; and wherever, throughout the whole world, that glad and gracious gospel shall be preached, there also shall this, that the little maid hath done, be told for a memorial of her!

The *male* servant that I had in mind was Saul's. For, just as Naaman would never have heard of Elisha, and would never have been healed of his leprosy, but for his wife's maid, so Saul would never have heard of Samuel, and would never have become King of Israel, but for his servant. Saul had lost his asses; had searched every field and road-

way; but had failed to find them. Then his servant was seized of the idea that changed the face of history. *'Behold now,'* he said, *'there is in this city a man of God; and he is an honourable man; all that he saith cometh to pass; now let us go thither.'* And so Saul met Samuel; won Samuel's heart; and was, by Samuel, anointed king! 'If,' says Dr. Alexander Whyte, 'if you have no more sense of religion than Saul had, see that you have a religious servant. Saul's servant knew Samuel: he had sat at Samuel's feet. Saul was led up to the door of his *earthly* kingdom by the piety of his servant; and you may be led to the door of the *heavenly* kingdom by some servant of yours who has interests and acquaintances and experiences that you know nothing about!' The divine revelation that embalms, multiplies, and immortalizes narratives like the story of Naaman's maid and the story of Saul's servant was evidently designed for the special comfort, encouragement, and edification of folk like Mrs. Faulkner's Charlotte and my little friend Chrissy.

One evening, a few months before Chrissy's wedding, I met her at a meeting of the Girls' Guild. Dr. Gladwyn Harrison was delivering a lecture on *The Catacombs at Rome,* and I noted the look of eager absorption on Chrissy's face. She was drinking in every word. The story of the early Christians moved her almost to tears. One of these days, Chrissy and her proud young husband, having pros-

pered as they so richly deserve to do, will fulfil the dream of all young emigrants and revisit the Homeland. In the course of that great romantic tour they will see something of the classic cities of the old world. Chrissy, I know, will beg to be taken to Rome, and will never rest content until she has seen with her own eyes the Catacombs which Dr. Harrison so vividly described to her. When she does so, she will read, on those martyr tombs, many inscriptions that will seem to her very affecting and very beautiful. And, among others, she will come upon this:

> *Here lies Gordianus, deputy of Gaul, who was murdered with all his family for the faith; they rest in peace. Theophila, his handmaid, set up this.*

And, in her day, Theophila, whose fidelity and devotion have been admired by every visitor to the Catacombs for nearly twenty centuries, spoke of herself as *only a servant!*

VIII

'ONLY A SERVANT!'

STRANGE how things happen! Last Monday I wrote the story of *Chrissy*. On Tuesday afternoon I set out on a long railway journey; and, when I entered the compartment in which I had reserved a seat, I found, to my astonishment, that my travelling companion was to be Mr. Horace Penfold, Chrissy's old master. I told him that I had been writing the story of the wedding.

'Ah, well,' he replied, 'you can pull out all the stops in sounding the praises of Chrissy. You will never say anything too good about her. It was an extraordinary thing,' he went on, reflectively, 'it was an extraordinary thing how, after a year or two, she simply took control of our home and we were glad to have it so. We forgot that she was a servant, and found ourselves doing without a murmur just what she told us to do. And her influence on the children —well, it was wonderful! Mrs. Penfold and I never took much interest in church and religion, and that kind of thing; and we always felt that the children needed something that we were unable to give

them. But, my word, Chrissy made up for all that! We never hear the kiddies saying their prayers at night without feeling thankful that Chrissy came our way. So you can't wonder,' he added, meaningly, 'you can't wonder that we sometimes drop in on Sunday nights to hear what you've got to say.'

Now, in those sentences, uttered in the course of an irresponsible conversation in a railway carriage, Mr. Penfold put his finger on one of the oddest, but most stable, qualities in human nature, a quality that modest folk who, like Chrissy, speak of themselves as *'only servants'* often forget. I refer to the fact that we all—high and low—love to be commanded and controlled. We dearly love a lord. Men trick themselves, by a process of intellectual jugglery, into thinking that they revel in *ruling*. It is all nonsense. They do nothing of the kind. Every careful student of human nature knows that men revel in *being ruled*. The orator at the street corner who promises to distribute crowns and sceptres broadcast does not know what he is talking about. In their heart of hearts men do not want crowns and sceptres. They long to be wisely led and firmly governed. In the unplumbed depths of our complex natures there is a craving for the imperious. We hunger to be commanded. Let a man win our trust, our confidence, our affection; and his coronation is secure. In social status he may rank above us or below us; it does not matter in the least. The kings

to whom the heart swears allegiance are seldom crowned in virtue of social superiority. Life's loftiest authorities are scarcely ever enthroned. Old Charlotte's ascendancy over her mistress is but one example of the fact that, more often than not, the accents to which we yield the most unquestioning obedience come to us, not from a higher social plane, but from a lower. The voices that are most authoritative and most persuasive come to us not from courts but from kitchens. Who does not remember the satisfying proportions of Richard Jefferies' *Gamekeeper?* Our prince of naturalists sketches him as he accompanies his master about the great estate. He is only a servant, and his master is a lord. And yet—'when a trusted servant like this accompanies his master, often in solitary rambles for hours together, dignity must unbend now and then, however great the social difference between them; and thus a man of strong individuality and a really valuable gift of observation insensibly guides his master.' And so it comes to pass that the old gamekeeper rules the estate like a lord, and his master does the gamekeeper's will like a slave. In the magnificent person of *David Elginbrod,* George Macdonald has given us a classical example of the same phenomenon. Sir Walter Scott, too, has accustomed us to the laird who lived in mortal terror of offending his old serving-man. Or change the sex. In *The Rosary,* Mrs. Barclay makes the Hon. Jane

Champion ask Garth Dalmain why he does not marry. And Garth tells her of old Margery, his childhood's friend and nurse, now his housekeeper and general mender and tender; old Margery, with her black satin apron, lawn kerchief and lavender ribbons. 'No doubt, Miss Champion, it will seem absurd to you,' Garth says, 'that I should sit here on the duchess's lawn and confess that I have been held back from proposing marriage to the women I most admired, because of what would have been my old nurse's opinion of them.' Yet so it always is. Our servants are often our masters. Life's loftiest authorities never derive their sanctions from rank, office, or station. The soul has coronations and enthronements of her own. Many a mistress, like Mrs. Faulkner, has woven an invisible crown about her servant's brows.

And so has many a child. Washington Irving, for example. Washington Irving is never tired of talking about his old nurse. He tells us again and again how much he owes to her; and, when at last she died, he buried her in the same grave with his mother. Every memory of his childhood is interwoven with the thought of her. He was named, of course, after George Washington; and he could never recall the fact without telling a story of his old nurse. 'I remember George Washington perfectly,' he used to say. 'There was one occasion when he appeared in a public procession; my nurse,

a good old Scotchwoman, was very anxious for me to see him, and held me up in her arms as he rode past. This, however, did not satisfy her; so the next day, when walking with me in Broadway, she, espying him in a shop, seized my hand and darted in, exclaiming in her broad Scotch, "Please, your Excellency, here's a bairn that's called after ye!" General Washington then turned his benevolent face full upon me, smiled, laid his hand upon my head, and gave me his blessing, which I have reason to believe has attended me through life. I was not five years old, yet I can feel that hand upon my head even now.'

But I suppose that the classical instance of this sort of thing is the case of Lord Shaftesbury. 'My lords,' exclaimed the Duke of Argyll, on a really historic occasion, 'the social reforms of the nineteenth century have not been due to a political party. They have been due mainly to the influence, the character, and the perseverance of one man, the late Lord Shaftesbury.' But let us go one step further back! If Lord Shaftesbury is the greatest personal factor in the shaping of our new civilization, what was the greatest personal factor in shaping the character of Lord Shaftesbury? And on that point there can be no uncertainty at all. Lord Shaftesbury's biographer unhesitatingly attributes the formation of his character to a faithful old servant, Maria Millis, who had been connected with the

family from girlhood. 'She was a simple-minded, affectionate Christian woman,' Mr. Hodder says. 'She formed a strong attachment to the gentle, serious child, and would take him on her knees and tell him Bible stories, especially the sweet story of the Manger of Bethlehem and the Cross of Calvary. It was her hand that touched the chords and awakened the first music of his spiritual life. She taught him the first prayer he ever learnt; he used it constantly in later years; and, in his old age, especially in times of sickness, he very frequently found himself repeating those simple words.' 'In her will,' Mr. Hodder says again, 'she left him her watch, and, until the day of his death, he never wore any other. He was fond, even to the last, of showing it. "That," he used to say, "was given to me by the best friend I ever had!" '

Lord Shaftesbury and Maria Millis stand, respectively, as the federal representatives of two vast companies. Lord Shaftesbury represents the *Epoch-makers.* And Maria Millis represents the *Makers of the Epoch-makers.* Yet Maria Millis was, as Chrissy would say, *only a servant.*

It goes without saying, of course, that to all this there is a darker side. You cannot put power in a man's hands—whether it be the power of Money or of Authority or of Love—without making it possible for him to greatly bless or greatly curse. When you place a crown on a man's head, and a sceptre in

his hands, you put him in a position to be the benefactor of millions, and, at the same time, you put him in a position to become the object of universal execration. That law is world-wide; it applies, therefore, to the authority with which servants are invested. Since I first took to scribbling, I have committed to these books many of my own ministerial experiences. Most of them are happy ones: a few are sad. But by far the saddest of them all is a story that can never be told. Although it belongs to the days of long ago, I am unable even now to recall it without a shudder. I think of that charming Christian home nestling among the green foothills of the Dreadnought Ranges in New Zealand. I think of it as I knew it first, before the cruel and crushing calamity swept down upon it. I think of it afterwards, its joy blasted and shattered. I think of the long years of unutterable anguish that followed; I think of the silent tears, the hopeless heartbreak, the torture, and the desolation. And the pity of it all was that it seemed to be nobody's fault. I mean it was the fault of none of the sufferers, of none of those within that ruined home. Still further back across the years, however, there was a pure and innocent boy left too much at the mercy of a servant. And that servant failed to realize—as Maria Millis and Chrissy realized—that the possibilities of her position were positively sublime. Maria Millis would have put her arm round the boy's

shoulders and would have told him, as sweetly and as simply as the story could be told, of *'the Manger at Bethlehem and the Cross of Calvary.'* Chrissy would have enriched that boyish mind with the treasure that, to their own sorrow, the parents were unable to impart to him.—but *that* servant—the servant of half a century ago—left a taint on the mind of her young charge, and the taint became a corruption, and the corruption became a disease; and whole cataracts of tears have failed to wash away the hideous consequences.

But such a bitter memory only enhances my admiration for Chrissy. And, now that I come to think of it, there appears to me to be something positively sacramental about a servant's life. I do not claim, by any means, that I am the first to discover it. Five hundred years ago, an old Franciscan friar, Oliver Maillard by name, discoursed most quaintly and effectively upon this aspect of affairs. The human heart, Father Maillard said, was a Wayside Inn. But the Inn is nothing, and less than nothing, without the Guest. To be perfectly equipped, therefore, he said, the Inn needs three serving-maids. The office of the first, whose name is *Prayer,* is to go out and invite the Divine Guest to enter. The duty of the second, whose name is *Obedience,* is to open wide the door at His approach, that He may enter freely and find a sincere and hearty welcome. And the province of the third, whose name is *Peace,*

is to receive Him joyfully, and make Him feel at home.

This is excellent; but it is not exactly what I myself had in mind. In saying that there appeared to me to be something positively sacramental about a servant's life, I was thinking along another line. Viewed from my angle, Maria Millis, pointing the infant Shaftesbury to *'the Manger at Bethlehem and the Cross of Calvary,'* becomes a great symbolic figure. It is, indeed, a symbol—a sacramental symbol—of my own work. For we ministers exist only that we may point men and women to *'the Manger at Bethlehem and the Cross of Calvary.'* I spend a good deal of time in ringing at front door bells. I go to a house, and the servant answers the door. She does not engage me in conversation or introduce business of her own. She says only as much as is necessary intelligently to introduce me to her master. And then, as I enter *his* presence, *she* silently vanishes, and I see her no more. To be just such a servant is the height of a true minister's ambition. He must needs show himself. His personality must be felt. But he must show himself only in such a way, and his personality must be felt only to such an extent, as will lead those to whom he ministers into the presence of his Lord. And having led them into that divine Presence, and introduced them to his Master, he is content to vanish and be as though he had not been.

IX

THE WEATHER

'LET'S talk about the weather!' suggests Kate Stanley, the charming daughter of the omniscient Major-General in Sir W. S. Gilbert's *Pirates of Penzance*. And, on the instant, her innumerable sisters join her in the chattering chorus:

> How beautifully blue the sky,
> The glass is rising very high.
> Continue fine I hope it may,
> And yet it rained but yesterday.
> To-morrow it may pour again
> (I hear the country wants some rain),
> Yet people say, I know not why,
> That we shall have a warm July.

There can be no doubt that the weather has a lot to answer for—a lot of chatter and gossip, I mean. I had occasion to run round the corner this morning to interview a friend on a matter of some urgency. It was raining in torrents, and, on the way, eleven different people mentioned to me the interesting circumstance. Now, if I had left my umbrella at home, and had been sauntering slowly through the streets, hands in pockets, as though I were drinking in the balmy summer air, the eagerness of these eleven people to apprise me of the meteorological conditions prevailing at the moment would have been perfectly

intelligible. I should, in that case, have understood that they were under the impression that the torrential downpour, which was threatening to wash the clothes off my back, had escaped my observation. But, as a matter of fact, I was using my umbrella; the water was streaming off it on to my shining macintosh; and I was making all the haste I could. That being so, the anxiety of my friends to keep me posted concerning the latest atmospheric developments is not quite so comprehensible. Some occult reason must underlie their apparently superfluous remarks. There is more in this matter than appears on the surface. And now that I am back in my own cosy study, have changed my damp clothes for dry ones, and have donned a pair of warm slippers, I have resolved to talk the matter over with myself. Why, when they meet you in the street, do all kinds and conditions of men—and women—begin to talk about the weather?

As a rule we like to make our remarks striking, arresting, characteristic. If we cannot scintillate, we like at least to hold the attention. A yawn fills us with dismay. But nobody will pretend that it is for this reason that we turn our attention to the weather. The observation that it is a wet night or a frosty morning or a pleasant afternoon never strikes the hearer as being particularly original or sparkling. Yet we, who delight in novelty, turn with strange persistence to this hackneyed theme! And, oddly

enough, it always appears to satisfy us! Since this old world began, the weather has very frequently proved woefully disappointing, but it has never proved disappointing as a subject of conversation. A thousand generations have talked daily of the weather and have never wearied of the theme. I hesitate to speak for a thousand generations yet to come. In these days of stupendous happenings, of sensational discoveries and of lightning changes, it is obviously dangerous to attempt any forecast of the future. That horizon is enveloped in a golden haze. Yet no one will rebuke the temerity of the prophet who predicts that, as long as the planet is inhabited, and as long as its inhabitants talk, the weather will always hold pride of place among their favourite and most frequent topics. Why? That is the question: Why? Why? Why?

Well, to begin with, the weather evidently allures us because, as a subject of conversation, it is so perfectly safe. We have a great deal of sympathy with Esther Lyon, in *Felix Holt*. Esther did not like walking out with her father because, when people spoke to him on the street, it was his wont, instead of remarking on the weather and passing on, to pour forth reflections on the traces of the divine government or to narrate a peculiar incident recorded in the life of the eminent Mr. Richard Baxter. The eleven friends whom I met this morning wanted, for courtesy's sake, to say something; but,

in the nature of the case, they wished to say something that would excite no discussion. Novel, sparkling, original observations inevitably provoke rejoinder or debate. There are times when you desire no such wordy combat. This morning, for example. If one of my eleven friends had been so indiscreet as to inquire after my health, he would have run a grave risk. I should have had to reply, and he might have been doomed to stand there in the pouring rain whilst I described the symptoms of a fit of indigestion or a bilious attack. It he had made a passing comment on the morning's news, he would very possibly have involved himself in a lengthy exposition of my peculiar opinions on that particular subject—and a score of others. A political or theological remark would, quite conceivably, have cost him a violent attack of rheumatic fever. But these friends of mine all felt that they were perfectly safe with the weather. It was wet: there was no doubt about it. The most contentious soul on the planet could scarcely challenge that proposition. A theme so immune from all danger of controversy was just the subject for the occasion.

On fine days the situation is only slightly changed. On fine days we tell each other that it is fine just as, on wet days, we tell each other that it is wet. The phenomenon arises from our desire to find ourselves on common ground. The weather represents one of the colossal impartialities of the universe. *'He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good,*

and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.' Be we old or young, rich or poor, the elements treat us all alike. Emerson used to say that he liked to establish some point of agreement with every man he met, if it was only on their mutual conviction that it was a very fine day. The weather is the only subject on which you can be absolutely confident of reaching that perfect conformity of thought and experience. Things change so swiftly in a world like this that no man can be certain, when he sees his friend approaching, as to the themes that will be agreeable and interesting to him. But he knows, even before they shake hands, of one factor that they enjoy—or endure—in common, and, by a stroke of philosophical strategy, he puts their relationship on a pleasant and secure footing by introducing the most antique but least threadbare of all possible themes.

Even if we are in the humor for argument, we like to agree before we differ. When I see my intellectual adversary coming up the street, I do not smite him in the face with a proposition that I know he will combat. We talk about the weather. I remark that it is a pleasant afternoon, and he replies that it is one of the most delightful that we have had for some time. This exchange of observations corresponds with the law by which pugilists shake hands before striking. It is a wholesome custom. It creates an atmosphere.

Or it may be that two men meet who do not happen to have met for years. If the meeting is to be what both would wish it to be, it is important that a spirit of camaraderie and good fellowship should be established at once. This being so, any other subject is obviously perilous. A too-serious inquiry concerning health may only lead to the discovery that one is ailing and the other well, in which case they have placed themselves poles apart by the well-meant allusion. The more fortunate of the two finds himself on the horns of a dilemma. If he adopts a sympathetic tone, he will be treated to a dismal story of aches and pains that will prove unutterably depressing. And if, in order to lift the dialogue to more cheerful themes, he abruptly changes the subject, his friend will think him singularly hard, callous, and apathetic. In either case the conversation, considered as a conversation, is foredoomed to failure. It was ruined through its having struck a false note at the start.

The same disaster may attend such an inquiry as 'How are things?' or 'How is business?' Take a man with whom the struggle for existence is going hardly. He feels, on being asked such a question, that he has been stung, and the poignancy of his pain is intensified by the fact that he is too proud to give his interrogator the slightest hint of it. Moreover, by the operation of a singular but familiar law, his suffering will be almost exactly in proportion to

the prosperity of his questioner. Just as weak eyes are irritated by excess of light, so wretchedness is mocked by gaiety and adversity by affluence. There are more suicides in sunny climates than in gloomy ones; and, all the world over, there are more in summer than in winter. The man who, fighting for his very life against a multitude of adverse circumstances, meets a friend with whom everything is going merrily, will, especially if he be of a sensitive temperament, ill endure any inquiry that seems to point, even obliquely, at his own misfortune. For these reasons—reasons that we probably cherish unconsciously or sub-consciously—we fall back upon the weather. The most conclusive proof of this rule is the exception to it. For who would dream of saluting with a jaunty remark about the weather one who was debarred from sharing it with us? No man of any feeling, on entering a darkened sick-room or a prison-cell on a sunny day, would dream of opening the conversation with a reference to the brightness out of doors. And the fact that, under such conditions, the visitor would instinctively swerve from his inveterate custom, furnishes a valuable and significant clue to the rationale of the custom itself.

Still, there are always two or three ways of doing a thing. There are two or three ways of talking about the weather. There is the matter-of-fact way. A recent writer has pointed out that, in America,

there is no public official whose functions are taken more seriously by the community than is the superintendent of the Government Meteorological Bureau at New York. A large part of his time is taken up in answering inquiries from business men. There are thousands of people whose profits and losses fluctuate with every change of the weather. Raindrops may spell ruin. These people are not talking about the weather for fun.

Then there is the man who talks about the weather in a way that makes you feel that, whatever winds may blow, he is resolved to make the best of them. If it rains as it rained this morning, he tells you that it's going to clear; or, if there are no indications to warrant such a forecast, he reminds you that it will do a world of good to the country. And, at the opposite pole, there is the man whose comments on the weather invariably make the weather seem worse than it really is. I never listen to such dismal observations without thinking of Mark Rutherford. Who that has once read the *Autobiography* can ever forget the story of Mark's induction to his first church? He describes the ardour with which he preached. The great truths that he uttered meant everything to him; and he poured out his soul with a pent-up intensity of passion. And then? 'After it was over I went down into the vestry. Nobody came near me but the chapel-keeper, who said *it was raining,* and immediately went away to put out the lights and shut

up the building. I had no umbrella, and there was nothing to be done but to walk to my lodgings in the wet.' Everybody knows what followed. The overwrought nerves collapsed. There came a terrible breakdown: his reason staggered. He eventually left the ministry. It is a sad story. If only some good earnest soul had shaken hands with him that first Sunday night and expressed agreement with, or even interest in, the words that he had uttered! But there was only the chapel-keeper; and he only said that *it was raining!*

I have often wondered what Adam said to Eve when he met her for the first time. I cannot resist a conviction that his introductory remark had some reference to the loveliness of the morning. It may have been drizzling for aught I know; but what has that to do with it? Tennyson says that *in the Spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love.* The statement is so near to the truth that we need not quarrel with it: if it is not scientifically accurate we must allow something for a poet's licence. To be strictly precise, the fact is that, when a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love, it is always Springtime with him, even though the thermometer may record many degrees below zero and the ground be heavily encrusted with frozen snow. In that happy man's soul, the flowers are all blooming and the birds are all singing; and *those* are the flowers and *those* the birds that make the Spring-

time of us all. Understood in the light of this ampler interpretation, we may allow Tennyson's assertion to pass unchallenged. It was certainly Springtime with Adam when he first met Eve, her beauty veiled in those golden tresses with which the wayward winds were toying. Milton tells us so; and Milton ought to know. Poor blind John Milton! There lies before me at this moment a coloured copy of T. K. Skelton's picture representing Milton sitting amidst a forest of fragrant flowers and sweet-smelling herbs, dictating to his daughters the stanzas that have moved the world. He could not see the riot of colour in the garden around him, the garden that he loved so well; but he saw, as clearly as though he walked among them, the blossoms that twinkled and nodded and flamed in the Garden of Eden. And here, amidst violets and roses, crocuses and hyacinths, he saw Eve prepare her beauteous bower.

By all this Milton meant what Tennyson meant, only Tennyson accidentally stood the truth on its head. He meant that our weather is generally homemade. The New Testament presents to the enraptured eyes of men the picture of a soul that was always ineffably sweet. He knew dull days and damp days and dark days—days far darker than we are ever likely to experience. But He always kept the foul weather outside. Mr. Frederick Langbridge has a song about the weather.

It's the heart where the summer is moulded
And woven the magical blue,
And always a glory is folded
That waits but a welcome from you.
The world is the world that you make it,
A dungeon, a desert, a bower ;
The sunshine is falling and cuckoos are calling
If only the heart is in flower.

And those who have read that New Testament idyll with eyes wide open know that secret place in which the stores of sunshine are inexhaustible.

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